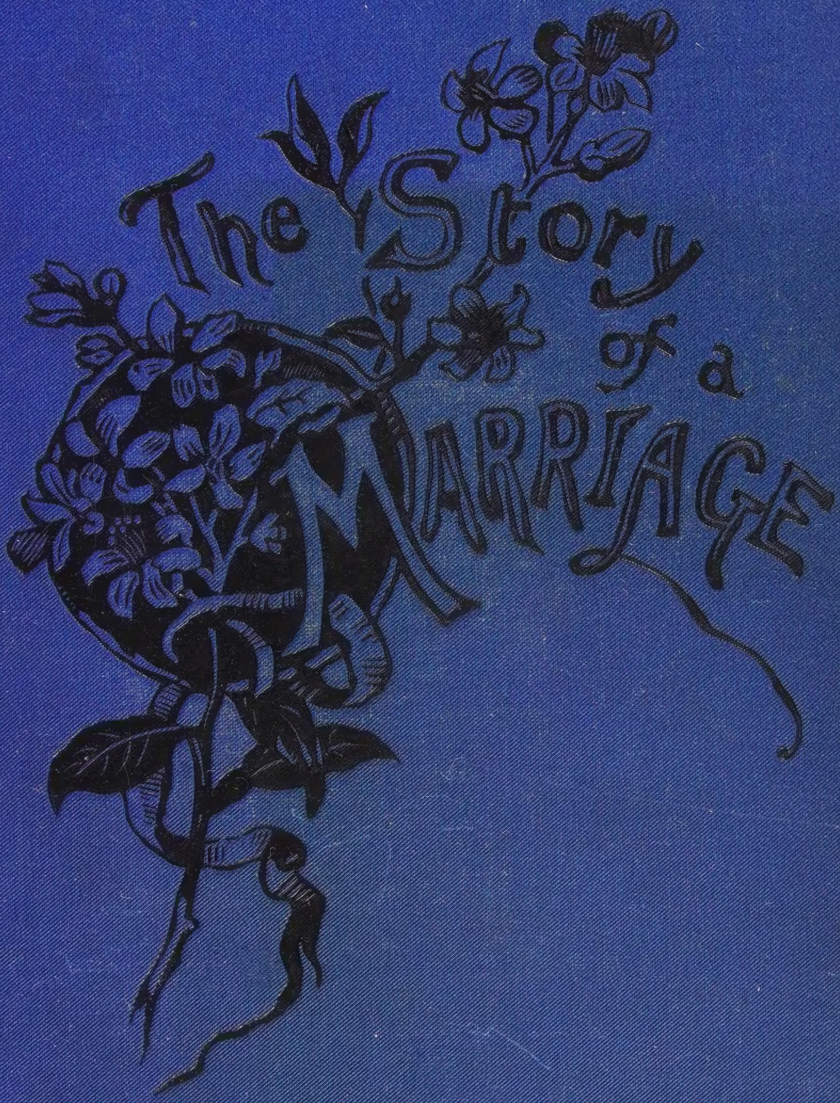
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THE

STORY OF A MARRIAGE

VOL. II.

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THE

STORY OF A MARRIAGE

BY

L. BALDWIN

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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THE SECOND VOLUME

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THE

STORY OF A MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ACCEPTED LOVER.

'Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.'

WORDSWORTH.

EARLY on the following afternoon, in accordance with his promise, Laurence called on Bessie's father to ask his consent to their engagement. He was sufficiently acquainted with Terah Jarvis's habits to be aware that about this hour he usually sat in his shirt

sleeves on a bench at the back of the house, commanding an uninterrupted view of his nursery gardens, peacefully smoking a pipe of Bishop Blaize tobacco, and explaining his theory of things in general to anyone who had leisure to listen to him. Laurence preferred to seek the dreaded interview in the garden, where he might hope to find Terah alone, rather than in the house, which was pre-eminently Mrs. Jarvis's domain; for, when driven to make a choice between Bessie's parents, he found that her father was less intolerable to him than her mother. Perhaps an unacknowledged fear, deep down in his heart, that a daughter is bound, sooner or later, to resemble her mother, may have added strength and given point to his growing dislike of Mrs. Jarvis. But, be this as it may, Laurence was well pleased to find Terah Jarvis by himself, and, approaching him with a somewhat laboured air of friendliness, he said:

'I should like to sit here with you for a little while, Mr. Jarvis, though I'm afraid I have not earned a rest, as you have.'

'Why, a man does get rather drowsy like these hot afternoons, when he's been on his legs since five o'clock in the morning. Sit you down, and welcome, sir,' and Terah moved to make room for Laurence on the bench, and with his handkerchief carefully wiped away the circle of cider left by his china mug.

An awkward silence fell, and Laurence cleared his throat, as though he were going to speak, but said nothing.

'My girl tells me as you want to speak to me partikilir,' said Terah at last, and he puffed hard at his pipe, and Laurence's heart beat so violently, he could scarcely breathe.

'Bessie told you, I suppose, what it was that I wished to speak to you about?'

'Aye, sir, she did, and you might ha' knocked me down with a straw. If anybody had ha' told me that Mr. Temple 'ud ask to

marry our Bessie, I should ha' said to him, as soon as look at him—I should ha' said—but I won't say what I should ha' said ; a gentleman like you wouldn't care to hear the language. But I'll fetch Mrs. Jarvis—you'd like to speak to her.'

'On no account!' said Laurence eagerly. 'There is not the slightest necessity to call Mrs. Jarvis—you can speak for both. I have come to ask your consent to my engagement with your daughter. Will you give her to me as my wife?'

'Now, sir, you've spoke out, and me and Mrs. Jarvis consider you have acted upright, and we shall be proud for you to marry our Bessie when you please.'

'In about a year from now, or less, I think, would be time for us to marry,' said Laurence, busying himself with tracing figures in the gravel with his cane as he spoke.

The matter-of-fact mention of his intended marriage to a man like Terah Jarvis seemed to

dispel the romance that surrounded Bessie in his mind. She did not seem so near to him, so peculiarly his own, now that her father had given her to him, and she had consented to be his wife, as she had done when his love for her was a secret locked in his own heart. But he had no time to reflect then; he must speak, and speak plainly, to a plain man, on a subject that till now had been too sacred to be put into words.

'I mention a longer engagement than perhaps you expected,' continued Laurence, 'because you will understand that I should like to educate and cultivate your daughter's mind somewhat during that time.'

Terah Jarvis glanced suspiciously at Laurence with his ferrety eyes, and then, as one who makes excuses for the eccentricities of gentlefolks, said, 'Some gentlemen likes one thing and some likes another, but me and my missis has always been used to think our Bessie did very well as she was. But I hope

she'll try and give satisfaction. Did she thank you, sir, as she'd ought to?'

Laurence felt the blood rush to his face at the old man's intolerable remarks.

'It is I who ought to thank your daughter for making me a very happy man,' he said warmly, 'and she shall never regret having reposed such generous confidence in me.'

'Well, sir, I hope not,' chimed in Mrs. Jarvis, who, unseen, had come close to them while they were speaking, and heard Temple's last remark; 'for we'd trouble enough with our eldest girl—not but what Bessie is a deal prouder than 'Arriett was, and holds her 'ead high, which is a path of safety in a young woman——'

Here Laurence Temple rose, took off his hat, and, stiffly bowing to Mrs. Jarvis, literally froze the flood of her loquacity by the chilling politeness with which he offered her his place on the bench. Her eyes fell beneath his cold glance, her words languished, and, coughing

a genteel, artificial cough into her finger tips, she seated herself in supreme discomfort on the extreme edge of the bench by her husband.

For the moment Mrs. Jarvis was silenced and overawed, and, though she was intensely proud of the occasion that had brought Mr. Temple to the house, she was thinking how much merrier it would have been if Job Tolley was going to marry Bessie instead.

Laurence dared not give her time to recover her self-possession. He could endure nothing further from her. If he did not immediately strengthen his resolution by the sight of the dear creature for whose sake he suffered this sordid and inglorious martyrdom, could he remain steadfast to his purpose?

'Is Bessie at home?' he asked abruptly.

'To be sure, she is, Mr. Temple. You'll find her in the parlour, and little Jack's at school, and I'll see as he don't come worrit-

ing you and Bessie no more,' and Mrs. Jarvis rose to lead him to the house.

But Temple stopped her by saying with decision, 'I prefer to go alone, thank you,' and, quelled and dispirited by his cold demeanour, Mrs. Jarvis seated herself again by her husband.

Temple entered Bessie's presence, still ruffled and irritated by her mother, but he soon forgot it all in the contemplation of her calm and refined beauty. She was so lovely in her shy pride when he told her that her parents had consented to their engagement, and she showed some insight into his feelings when she said, with many a pretty blush :

'I know father and mother are very different to what you're used to, Mr. Temple ; you must please t' excuse them, for they've had no schooling.'

Temple lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it tenderly, respectfully. 'I am the last man in the world, my dearest, to expect

from any either manners or knowledge they have not had the opportunity of acquiring. But yours will be a very different destiny from your parents', my Bessie; for you are as unlike them in mind as you are in body; and, while it is right that you should respect them, you must not imitate them in a single thing.' And the thought of Mrs. Jarvis gave an imperious and unloverlike ring to Temple's voice.

'You know, dear Bessie, you are mine now—mine to guide and to instruct, to make a very perfect wife and companion. I shall educate you, and cultivate your excellent abilities. It will be my delight to impart to you gradually all the knowledge your mind can assimilate, and it will make my highest happiness to watch your development and improvement;' and Lawrence looked at the lovely girl before him with glowing enthusiasm.

Bessie was uncomfortable. She did not know that she needed so much improving.

'Must ladies learn a great deal?' she asked timidly.

'Yes, a great deal,' said Laurence, smiling at the *naïveté* of the question; 'but, then, it is not education alone that makes a lady, my Bessie, but certain fine and gentle qualities of heart, such as you possess, so that you can be a lady, and yet be very ignorant. Only, I do not want you to remain this imperfect kind of lady. I want you to be a lady with your life made rich and happy by cultivation, with all the faculties heaven has given you duly developed. I would have your mind made as beautiful by cultivation as your face is beautiful by nature. I would have you a "king's daughter, all glorious within,"' and his voice grew deep and tender as he spoke, but Bessie, unable to understand or to accompany him in his flight, promptly brought him back to matters within her comprehension by the question, 'Shall you want me to learn to play the piano?'

'God forbid,' rejoined Temple hastily, remembering vividly his own hated music-lessons in his boyhood, and what he had suffered from his sister's practising. 'That is to say, not unless you very much wish to learn music, my dear; but, indeed, I hope to occupy your time sufficiently without that. You will have a great deal to learn,' and he watched his beloved thread her needle, and hide her pretty filbert nail in a species of small brass bucket, or thimble, and begin to sew.

Bessie did not enjoy being told so often that she had a great deal to learn. It wounded both her surface vanity and her inner pride. 'I do know a few things, Mr. Temple,' she said quietly.

'And what do you know, my Bessie?' he said with an amused smile. 'Come, tell me all your accomplishments'—and he took the hand that was reaching the reel of cotton and held it in his own.

'Well, I can cut out things and make them, and I can sing some old songs that my grandfather Wylie taught me, and I can make cowslip wine as clear as glass, and bread that eats like cake,' and Bessie paused for a moment in the enumeration of her acquirements, while Temple beamed with delight and bade her go on, for he was sure there were many more things she could do.

'Well, then, I can mark 'nitials on linen,' she continued, 'and I can boil and roast, and I can dry feathers, and mother says I can make a Norfolk dumpling with anyone,' and Bessie held up her head with a proud animation that heightened her beauty a hundredfold.

'Very pretty and womanly accomplishments,' said Temple warmly, printing a kiss on the hand he still held in his, 'and till now absolutely all that you required to know. But from to-day, dearest, we date a new and fuller life, and, while I would not have you

forget a single one of your simple acquirements, I will add to them all that my wife ought to know,' and he fell to talking much that was wholly unintelligible to poor Bessie.

To Laurence Temple it all seemed clear and practical enough. The whole world was to be better, and simpler, and stronger for his love of Bessie Jarvis. His marriage with an uneducated, and therefore, he believed, unsophisticated girl, would embolden other men of his rank, who longed to return to a primitive life, to follow his example without fear. The woman who did not know luxury would not want it (so he argued), and he and his wife would lead an ideal life of refinement and simplicity. He would inform her spirit with all knowledge needful for a lofty and unworldly life, and withhold from her everything that was injurious or debasing. Bessie Jarvis was to her lover the high priestess in a temple sacred to simplicity and purity. Her

beauty was to him a thing so sacred that, though she was his betrothed wife, he would not, dare not, take her in his arms; but he kissed her hand as one who stands at the outer door of the sanctuary.

Laurence wrote to his friend in a triumphant strain, telling him of his glorious good fortune in winning the ideal woman for his wife. The tone of the letter was so jubilant, so exalted, that Borradale trembled for Temple when the inevitable awakening should come. Still, it is better for a man to have dwelt briefly in 'upper land,' even if he is cast out naked and wounded, than never to have set foot upon its gleaming shore.

'They are not married yet,' said Borradale as he tore the letter into small bits and burnt it. 'A thousand things may happen to prevent it, or, still better, one thing may happen. Job Tolley may yet appear upon the scene in all his splendour, and utterly

rout Temple, which may the indulgent heavens grant!'

It was now the end of August, and Lawrence Temple had spent a month at the Crown Inn at Shelton, where his recent engagement with the daughter of so well known a man as Terah Jarvis was the one absorbing theme of conversation in the little town and its environs. Nothing else was thought of or spoken about in the shops and in the streets, in the church porch or in the gallery of the Dissenting chapel, in the public-house or in the waggons on the high road; and on Saturday the news travelled, together with butter and eggs, as far as Bridgnorth market. No one heard the strange news without interest, and few without comment. The young ladies in Shelton were unduly depressed by it, while the 'young persons' were unduly elated, falsely supposing that because a gentleman wanted to marry Bessie Jarvis there must be many more like him, waiting only for a little en-

couragement to come forward and propose for Bessie's friends. Laurence was not a self-conscious man, but it was impossible for him to stir out-of-doors in the little town without being aware that he was an object of general attention. What could there be about him that caused young people to titter as they passed him, and old people to stand still and gaze after him? He could not guess the cause that made him an object of public curiosity and remark. Laurence would not have felt flattered if he had known that he was regarded as a kind of harmless lunatic, an eccentric gentleman of reported boundless wealth, who had been living on vegetables in a cottage, and was about to crown all his eccentricities by marrying Terah Jarvis's daughter.

Job Tolley, the head man at Harbottle's cheese and butter shop in the market-place, had just heard the displeasing and astounding news of Bessie Jarvis's engage-

ment, and had given the shopboy stringent orders to tell him when Mr. Temple passed by, in order that, unseen by him, he might satisfy himself as to the personal appearance of his successful rival. Tolley stood behind the counter, working up lumps of salt butter with resounding slaps, when the shopboy, who had been on the look-out for more than an hour, put his head in at the door, and shouted, 'He's a coming! Grey coat and billy-cock hat,' and Tolley rushed, butter-sticks in hand, to the window, where he pressed a face, pale as his own cheese, in the niche between the sardine boxes and the double Gloucesters, in time to have a very perfect view of Temple as he passed the shop. Thence he darted to the door to prolong his pleasing pain by watching him till he lost sight of him round the corner of Bridge Street.

Job Tolley, in the pursuit of his business, wore a white apron fastened behind with a brass heart. His shirt sleeves were turned

up above the elbow, his muscular arms were garnished with red hairs, and round his neck was loosely knotted a tea-green tie, the colour of which, in contrast with his flaming locks, had often, in moments happier than the present, afforded him the utmost satisfaction. He grasped his butter-sticks fiercely, and the blood surged into his pale face till it was as red as his hair, and his eyebrows and eyelashes shone white against his heated countenance.

'Don't seem nothing in him to charm a young woman. He's not my complexion, and he's a couple of inches shorter than me, and his 'air don't curl, and Bessie Jarvis never see me in a hat like that, nor 'Melia Harbottle neither. I'll be hanged if I can see what the attraction is. Because he's a gentleman, I suppose. A pretty gentleman to come a courting other folks's young women, when there's plenty of his own sort blue-mouldy for want of marrying. If such conduct ain't a bloated aristocracy all over! He may call hisself my

superior, but my equils he is not!' And, striking his butter-sticks together with a resounding smack, Job Tolley returned to his work, and dug a fresh square of butter out of the tub with vindictive energy.

It may not be believed, but, nevertheless, it was the case, that Job Tolley was exceedingly attractive to the women of his acquaintance. It is not for me to explain why so ugly, vain, and selfish a man should be especially pleasing to the opposite sex, so I may hold myself excused from attempting the impossible. There is a subtlety in such attraction; it lies beyond the domain of reason altogether, and yet it demands recognition as a fact, and it influenced Job Tolley's life more than he was aware of. He did not know that he held his present situation at the goodwill of his employer's daughter, who, when he had justly offended her father, implored him not to dismiss him. Nor were Amelia Harbottle and Bessie Jarvis the only women who looked

kindly upon Job Tolley. In the situation he held previous to his coming to Shelton his employer's wife, though ten years his senior, had shown so much kindness to him that her husband had taken a violent dislike to Tolley, resulting at last in his dismissal.

When Laurence Temple was lost to Job Tolley's contemptuous gaze at the corner of Bridge Street he was going to take a walk on the Armford road, that he might quietly think over the best way of breaking the news of his engagement to his sister and her husband. He knew that it would be a difficult, if not an impossible, task to reconcile Mrs. Stapleton to the idea of his marriage with a woman of Bessie Jarvis's birth and position. John Stapleton, he believed, might possibly understand his motives, though he would not approve his action, but his sister could do neither one nor the other. No princess of the Blood Royal could have a more deep-rooted horror of a *mésalliance* for any member of her sacred family than

had Mrs. Stapleton. She would rather attend the funeral of her dear and only brother than hear of his marriage with the daughter of a market-gardener and the grand-daughter of a cobbler.

While Laurence was absorbed in thinking how he should most gently break the news so sweet to him, so bitter to his sister, he was startled by the sound of wheels close to him, and a clear voice, through which rang a nervous tremor, saying, 'We very nearly ran over you, Laurence. We will bring Sir Stoke's tandem horn with us next time we drive, and sound a warning note on it.'

The voice was Helen Wentworth's, and the wheels that had come so near to Laurence were those of a large travelling-carriage, in which Helen and Lady Poges were seated. In the rumble behind the ladies sat Timmins, of forbidding aspect, vainly endeavouring to silence the small dog on her lap, barking so clamorously that even in the wilds of Shrop-

shire you might almost think that you stood in the porch at Poges Court.

'Lady Poges and Miss Wentworth!' said Temple, raising his hat, and approaching the carriage, which drew up by the roadside. 'What an unexpected pleasure! Surely you have dropped from the clouds, for I never heard a sound till you spoke. I am afraid I have startled you by allowing myself to be so nearly run over,' he added as he looked at Lady Poges's pale face and closed eyes.

'I thought the wheel had gone over your foot, and how should I explain it to Mrs. Stapleton, when they dine with us next Thursday, if we had killed her brother?' and the lady slowly opened her eyes.

Helen and Laurence laughed heartily. 'I really think, Auntie, that if we had had the misfortune to kill Mr. Temple we should tell his friends the bad news at once, and postpone the dinner.'

'Mr. Temple, you will take cold if you

stand in the road, and I am a little afraid for myself also. Will you not get into the carriage with us, and we can have a chat as we drive? Helen and I are making the little driving tour I mentioned to you, and our present destination is the Crown Inn at Shelton.'

'The very house I am staying in,' said Temple, stepping into the carriage. 'I hope they know that you are coming, for our accommodation is, to say the least of it, limited.'

'We have taken every precaution,' replied Lady Poges; 'we telegraphed a week ago to have the beds aired and fires lighted in the rooms, and I sent instructions that if our windows faced north or east, or north-north-east or east-north-east, the apertures were to be pasted over with strips of brown paper.'

Helen's heart beat wildly, and she busied herself in wrapping shawls and rugs about her aunt as safeguards against imaginary chills, that she might the better hide from Laurence, who sat opposite to her, the radiant smiles,

that came in spite of herself, at merely finding herself once more in his company.

'And have you enjoyed your rustic life as much as you expected?' asked Lady Poges languidly.

'A thousand times more,' said Laurence emphatically.

'Is there such pleasure in tiled floors, and cooking, and washing up?' asked Helen gaily.

'I can only say that I have found it the happiest month in my life,' said Laurence, avoiding the full brightness of her eyes as he spoke.

'Then I should suggest that some time when we are longing for a new pleasure, and life palls upon us, we should simply adjourn to the kitchen if there is not a cottage at hand, and send the servants upstairs, while we make merry with their work,' said Helen.

This remark so puzzled and disquieted Lady Poges that she was obliged to ask Laurence Temple what time it was, in order to re-

turn to the region of indisputable fact, about which no nonsense could be talked.

'It is precisely six o'clock,' he said, showing her the dial of his watch that she might see for herself, and be assured that he did not speak the language of metaphor or make use of any fanciful trope or image.

'And at seven we dine—merely a little soup, cutlets, and a rice pudding—and I shall retire early to rest. Will you give us the pleasure of your company from eight o'clock till nine, and then perhaps you will tell us about your strange life at the cottage?'

'With the greatest pleasure, and I will tell you how badly my friend Borradale and I behaved to Norton about his poem, and what an angel of good-humour he was,' and as he spoke the big carriage rattled up the narrow street leading to the Crown Inn, and passed so close to Bessie Jarvis that Laurence could have touched her.

Their eyes met, and Temple was about to

raise his hat to her when he remembered it would be highly inconvenient if they recognised each other in the present company, before he had told his friends of their engagement. So the intended salute merely turned into an awkward gesture, while the colour rushed to his face. Helen had seen it all. She noted the sudden flash of recognition that lighted Temple's eyes as they rested for a moment on the singularly handsome, fair-haired girl, and when their eyes met the girl blushed as deeply as Temple. She did not know what it meant, but she was sure that it was a chance meeting between the two, rendered embarrassing by her presence, and her heart sank within her. She was glad that the carriage turned in under the archway of the Crown Inn directly afterwards, and that the bustle of Lady Poges alighting began forthwith. Temple stayed by her gallantly to the end of the ceremony. He lifted the footstool, and the air-cushion, and the cap-box, and the hot-water bag, and the

luncheon-basket out of the carriage himself, and handed them to the footman, and so cleared a way of escape for Helen. Then he, and Helen, and Timmins in combined action helped Lady Poges to alight, to a homelike and familiar accompaniment of barking. She had no word of thanks for anyone, but repeatedly observed in tender tones, 'Pretty fellow, then,' to Nip, who, having already wetted his feet in a puddle, was leaping up against Helen's dress, leaving a streak of mud at every bound. Laurence offered Lady Poges his arm, and conducted her upstairs to her sitting-room in state, preceded by the landlord and landlady. She was agreeably surprised to find the atmosphere of the room prepared for her considerably closer than she had allowed herself to anticipate, and, as she gratefully inhaled its stale flatness, she said good-humouredly to her niece, 'You can write a line to your uncle, my dear, before dinner, and tell him I have reason to hope that I shall not take my worst kind of cold at the Crown Inn.'

And Laurence bade the ladies good-bye, and hastened away to make his peace with Bessie, and to explain his apparent rudeness when he passed her in the street without recognition.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE CROWN INN.

The two ladies sat down with but small appetite to their slender dinner at the Crown Inn. Lady Poges was depressed by discovering that there was no chimney-board to the fireplace, by means of which she could check the ventilation of her bedroom, and that the chair she would be obliged to sit on when her hair was taken down at night was higher than the one she was accustomed to at home. Such are among the hardships to which travellers are exposed, and Lady Poges took them very seriously to heart. Helen applied herself good-humouredly to suggesting how these difficulties might be surmounted and peace restored to her aunt's agitated spirit.

'We can overcome the difficulty of the fire-board by having the chest-of-drawers placed in front of the fireplace, so that no draught could blow down the chimney into the room,' she said.

'But, my dear, who ever saw a chest-of-drawers standing on the hearthrug! I am sure they are not intended for such a purpose; it would keep me awake all night, and, even if it did not do so, that does not help me out of the difficulty of the high chair;' and Lady Poges furrowed her brow with transverse lines, and worked it up and down like a Venetian blind.

'That is true; it still leaves us to grapple with the tall-chair difficulty,' said her niece, and she poured some water into her glass of Crown Inn claret, a wine so weak as to need no further diluting, but of a flavour that could not fail to be improved by mixing with any other fluid. 'I have it, auntie, you must sit on your box to have your hair brushed; that will be nice and low for you.'

'Sit on a box, child! A box has no back. No one ever sits on a box except a third-class person at a railway station, waiting for her train. I wonder at you, Helen.' And silence again fell upon the ladies.

Helen's gay spirits had deserted her since she had seen Laurence and the beautiful girl they had driven past unmistakably exchange a glance of recognition. That she was not a lady in the conventional use of the word, she had seen at once, and, moreover, Bessie was carrying on her arm a basket covered with a white cloth. But she was extremely handsome, and of a refined type of beauty, though Helen thought her expression hard and cold. She longed to know who the handsome stranger was, what she was to Laurence, and what Laurence was to her. If she could but summon up a sufficient semblance of indifference to remark to him casually on the beauty of the girl they had met, she might perhaps learn who she was. But Helen was not able to feign

an indifference she was far from feeling, and, even could she have done so, she was not sure that Laurence could do the same. She had noted how he changed colour when his eyes met Bessie's, and she was angry at this token of recognition.

Happily, Lady Poges had seen nothing. At the moment when the carriage passed so close to Bessie she was enjoying one of her frequent rests with closed eyes, or she could not have failed to notice so striking a beauty, and she would assuredly have asked Laurence if he knew who she was, and all about her.

Punctually at the hour Lady Poges had named, Laurence entered the sitting-room at the Crown Inn, having made his peace with Bessie in the interval. She had not been so easy to propitiate as he had hoped. Still it was but natural, under the circumstances, that she should be touchy, and Laurence made every allowance for her.

'You were ashamed of me when you had

your fine friends with you!' she said sullenly.

'I was never more proud of you, my Bessie, than when I unavoidably passed you with Lady Poges and her niece, and I would have given anything to have been able to introduce you to them. But my sister and her husband do not yet know of our engagement, and till I have told them of it I ought not to tell these ladies.'

Though Bessie was mollified somewhat by this aspect of the case, she asked Laurence innumerable questions about the young lady who sat opposite to him in the carriage, her name, her age, where she lived, how long he had known her, and whether she played the piano. Bessie was as eager to know all about Helen as Helen could be to know about her, but Bessie, being unrestricted either by good breeding or kind feeling, was able to gratify her curiosity, while Helen could not even betray to Laurence that she had seen Bessie. Laurence answered her questions fully and

frankly, and spoke with affection and admiration of Miss Wentworth as a friend to whom he should introduce his wife with the greatest pride and pleasure. Poor Bessie was utterly bewildered by his tone. In her narrow world she did not know of such a thing as friendship between men and women, and she could not understand how a man could speak with affection of any young woman who was not his sweetheart. And for every good word Temple said of Helen Wentworth she cordially hated her.

'Why didn't you want to marry her instead of me?' she asked with an expression of resentment on her fair face that he would have thought ugly enough on a plain one.

Laurence looked at Bessie with astonishment. 'I never thought of it,' he said briefly.

'If you'd asked her, she wouldn't have said No.'

'Bessie!'—and Laurence's indignant tone startled her—'say what you please to me, but

I cannot hear another disrespectful word about Miss Wentworth ;' and Bessie felt that she had ventured too far, and she made haste to appease and propitiate her lover, which was easily done, for she had but to express regret for offending him by speaking too plain, for she knew she was only a poor, ignorant girl, &c., and perhaps he would teach her better.

'Poor child!' thought Laurence, 'I love her for her simple, unsophisticated nature, and I must not expect to find in her the graces of a cultivated one as well. These will develop in time.'

When Laurence paid his evening visit to the ladies Helen was pouring out coffee, and her aunt had rallied her spirits sufficiently to be attempting a little languid play with Nip. They were both very curious to hear all he could tell them of his adventures in the cottage with his friends, and Lady Poges asked him to place his chair by her couch, that she might be close to the fountain-head of information.

'Now I think we have made every arrangement for a comfortable gossip,' said Helen, looking round the old-fashioned room, with its drawn curtains and bright fire. 'We want to hear all your adventures. One has heard of love in a cottage, but friendship in a cottage is a new idea, and I want to know how it worked.'

'It worked admirably and harmoniously. And don't you think we deserve a little praise? for there were three of us, and a three-cornered friendship is a somewhat complicated affair to manage.'

'Did you prove the truth of the old saying, that "two is company while three is none?" And did one of you occasionally take himself away, to allow the remaining two to be company?' asked Helen lightly.

'Yes, I think I gave Borradale and Norton a good many opportunities of cultivating each other's acquaintance in my absence; at least they told me so.'

'And did you keep your health during your very hazardous experiment?' asked Lady Poges slowly, looking anxiously at Temple, who was the embodiment of vigorous health.

'We bore up wonderfully, considering everything,' he said gravely; 'the only thing we found injurious to our health was washing our plates and dishes, and that, I admit, we hired a boy to do for us.'

'I knew that you would break down about the dish-washing. I foretold that your philosophy would not carry you through that,' said Helen, laughing.

'I think it was no failure, but rather a triumph of philosophy,' said Temple. 'I argued that it is waste of force for one man to do with loathing what another would do with pleasure. I assure you, the boy took a real delight in washing up dishes, and Borradale and I hated it.'

'Did not Mr. Norton take a share of the work with you?'

Temple smiled at the remembrance of Norton's helplessness.

'Nominally he took a third part of the household work; practically he did nothing but hinder us, and meet with all kinds of luckless accidents—destroying the crockery and partially destroying himself too, for he scalded his foot severely. After that Borradale took affairs into his own hands.'

'And did you keep your covenant that no woman should cross the threshold?' asked Helen, astonished at her own temerity.

'We kept the covenant to the letter, and were never tempted to break it.'

'How strange it must have seemed to you not to see the face of a woman for a whole month!' And Helen looked full at Temple, with the most innocent expression in the world, while his colour mounted, and her eyes fell when she saw that her shaft had struck home.

'It is the way to enhance pleasure to

deprive yourself of it for a time, and my friends and I return to the society of ladies with fresh appreciation,' said Temple, and Helen knew that his reply was an evasion, and she hated herself for having driven him to the necessity of employing it.

'We are going home the day after to-morrow,' interrupted Lady Poges, who felt that it was time they returned to the world of undisputed fact; 'can we take any message for you to your sister?'

'No, thank you, I think not. I shall be writing to her, at least to my brother-in-law, to-night.'

'Still, I can take Mrs. Stapleton news of you, as you are not going to Coombe Delaway at present.'

Laurence had risen to say good-night, for the ladies were going to retire early.

'No, I do not expect to visit my sister for some time, and perhaps before we meet again she will be able to give you news of me.'

'You are too paradoxical for me to understand you,' said Lady Poges with a weary smile; 'perhaps Helen, who has not my simple straightforwardness, can interpret your meaning.'

'I do not think she can,' said Temple, shaking hands warmly with Helen, whose congratulations on his happiness he longed to receive.

Helen returned his hand-pressure but slightly. A sure instinct told her that his unusual cordiality of manner was not for her; it was merely the involuntary expression of some inner expansion of feeling in which she had no share.

'I hope I may see you for a moment after breakfast to say good-bye. I am running up to town to-morrow to see Borradale off for Australia, and I shall not be back in Shelton till after you are gone. May I look in at nine o'clock, if it is not too early?' and Temple held Helen's passive hand while he spoke, and

she withdrew it without his being aware that she did so.

'I do not think there is any need for him to call in the morning to say good-bye,' said Helen as the door closed after Temple.

'Nonsense, Helen; it is a very proper attention for Laurence to pay you, and I beg that you will be most polite to him, if not for your own sake, at least for your uncle's and mine. Will you ring for Timmins, and I will go to bed now? I fear we shall have great difficulty with that high chair.'

An hour and a half later, when Helen went to her room, as she passed her aunt's door she heard her voice and Timmins's still in eager conversation, and she caught the words 'market-gardener' and 'Mr. Temple.' She smiled to herself, and wondered how two beings so wholly dissimilar as Mr. Temple and a market-gardener came to be mentioned in the same breath; but a conversation between Lady Poges and her maid was always more or

less of a wonder to Helen. Timmins usually came to Miss Wentworth's room when she had seen her mistress safely in bed, to brush her thick hair, and she left the door unlocked for her as she was accustomed to do at home. Helen was not pleased with herself that night, and that is not a frame of mind conducive of amiability towards others. She felt irritable in expectation of Timmins's chatter, which, when they travelled, was always more highly charged than usual with grumbling and repining. Helen was well acquainted with the order in which her complaints were poured forth. First, either the insufficiency or the unappetising nature of the food; secondly, the want of respect shown to her generally, but in that house particularly; and thirdly, but not least, she had expected a very different bed and pillows. Timmins, who had never slept fewer than three in a bed till she went into service, had grown extremely critical and hard to please in her sleeping accommodation,

and was perfectly frank in stating her requirements. As she entered the room it occurred to Helen that she might perhaps shorten the ordeal of grumbling if she questioned Timmins in the exact order of her grievances, that no time might be lost in leading up to the subject. So when she was seated opposite the looking-glass, and Timmins was brushing her hair out to its full length with long, steady strokes, she began:

'Did you have a good supper, Timmins?'

'I never noticed, miss,' and startled by the weird reply, Helen looked into her glass to see if it was indeed Timmins who spoke. Certainly it was Timmins, but with an excited and pent-up expression as though some agitating piece of news wrought within her and strove to find vent.

'Has everyone been polite to you?'

'I'd have let 'em know if they hadn't been, miss,' and she brushed harder, and worked her young mistress's mass of dark hair

higher up from the back of her head every moment.

'Does your bed seem comfortable?' asked Helen for the third and last question.

'I don't know, miss.'

What was the matter with Timmins? Helen was amused, and just a shade nervous too. Could the woman be going out of her mind? Timmins had her so completely in her power. She grasped Helen's hair firmly in her left hand till she had to sit very upright and stiffen her neck to prevent her head from being pulled backwards, and she drew it so tight from her forehead that she could scarcely close her eyes.

'Gently, gently, Timmins.'

'Beg your pardon, miss, but I've had some news to-night, and I suppose I was working it off on your back hair,' and she slightly relaxed her grasp.

'It must have been exciting news if I may judge by your brushing.'

'Well, miss, when gentry behaves themselves by not acting according, it is exciting news, though, thank goodness, it is nothing to do with me.'

'What do you mean, Timmins?'

'When I told my lady about it just now she was that disgusted she couldn't hardly believe it, but I've chapter and verse for what I say.'

'Well, Timmins, unless you can tell me this wonderful news very quickly, I wish you would finish my hair and let me get into bed,' and Helen yawned and tried to lean forward; but Timmins prevented this by tightening her grasp on her hair so that she was obliged to sit very upright opposite the glass in which her face was reflected in full unshadowed light. Their eyes met in the mirror and Helen said, 'I hope it is not bad news you have heard; it seems to affect you very much.'

'It's bad or good, as it's took, miss. There's some thinks it the best news they ever

heard, I'll be bound, and there's others, maybe, as it'll surprise more than it'll please.'

'Oh, my good Timmins, do make haste,' said Helen, suppressing a yawn and glancing towards the comfortable bed that awaited her.

'Well, Miss Helen, it's a bit of news about Mr. Temple, and if my own mother had told it me I should have called her a liar, soon as look at her, God forgive me!' And she felt Helen give a little strain forward; but she held her hair firmly, so that her face was pitilessly reflected in the glass, where not the shadow of a change passing over it was lost to Timmins's keen eyes. 'Mrs. Gadby, the landlady, told me you might have knocked her down with a straw when she heard it.'

'I really do not care to hear the landlady's gossip,' said Helen coldly.

'Oh, it's not Mrs. Gadby's no more than anyone else's. It's in everyone's mouth that Mr. Temple is going to marry a girl called

Bessie Jarvis, daughter of a market-gardener on the Shelton Road here. The Gadbys buy their green-stuff from him; he's got a heathen name of his own, Terah Jarvis they call him, and he was here on Tuesday with the vegetables, boasting shameful that his girl was going to marry Mr. Temple,' and Timmins saw Helen's face in the glass turn ashy white and dark shades settle round her eyes.

'It cannot be true, Timmins,' and her lips scarcely moved as she said it.

'Well, miss, if that isn't true, something worse must be true, for Mr. Temple goes to see her every day. She's a bold piece, I doubt.'

'What is the girl like?' said Helen indifferently.

'I've not seen her myself, miss, but handsome is as handsome does, I say; but that's not enough for the men. They call her very handsome—blue eyes and goldy hair—but it isn't my style; give me dark hair and a black

eye and someone in my own rank of life when it comes to marrying.'

'There, that will do, Timmins. Have me called at eight o'clock in the morning. Good-night.'

'Good-night, miss,' and Timmins retired well pleased to have been the first to tell her young mistress so thrilling a piece of news, and to have seen the effect it produced upon her. 'I always fancied Miss Helen cared for Mr. Temple, and now I know it,' thought Timmins.

Left by herself, Helen crossed the room and turned the key in the lock, and flung herself on her knees by the bedside in the attitude of prayer, but not to pray. She was stunned by the tidings she had heard so abruptly and through so ignoble a source. She had not known till now what was her real feeling towards Laurence Temple. But the knowledge that he loved another revealed to her in cruel clearness how dear he was to

her, how her whole world of love and thought centred in him. Helen hated herself for the storm of feeling roused in her young heart by hearing of Temple's engagement to Bessie Jarvis, whose fair face had come between her and happiness. How could a refined gentleman choose a vulgar, uneducated girl for his wife? It seemed as monstrous to Helen as though she were to marry one of her uncle's grooms. Had Laurence Temple given up culture, refinement, education, good-breeding —everything that she knew he valued so highly in women, for the sake of physical beauty only? Helen shrank from the thought as though there was degradation in it, and her conception of Laurence's character was rudely shaken. Knowing only the bare fact of his engagement to Bessie Jarvis, and of her inferiority to him in position and education, it was impossible that Helen should judge him fairly.

Laurence had never discussed with any of

his lady friends his determination to marry a woman in a lower rank than his own, and his choice of Terah Jarvis's daughter was as great a surprise to Helen as it would be to his sister. She did not know the efforts he made to teach and educate Bessie, nor the delight it gave him to imagine he was awakening an intellectual life in her, which he was to guide and foster. Of course one cannot deny that it was Bessie Jarvis's great beauty that had decided Temple that she was the particular market-gardener's daughter whose destiny was bound up with his own, and whose dormant faculties he was to awaken and cultivate; neither can anyone deny that, if nature had protected Bessie Jarvis with a countenance such as honest Timmins's, for instance, her mental faculties would have remained undeveloped while the world stood, so far as Laurence Temple was concerned.

Think of the engagement as she would, it could not appear to Helen other than degrad-

ing, that, for the sake of a fair face, Temple should marry a woman who could not possibly satisfy his refined and fastidious nature. And when the fire of her beauty was quenched, what would remain to him but grey ashes? Helen could not know that, to a man of Laurence Temple's nature, beauty in itself, though it were deaf and dumb, acts as an inspiration. And the influence of Bessie's beauty over him, instead of being, as Helen supposed it to be, gross, was distinctly ennobling, and by its means Bessie conferred greater benefits on Temple than she received from his most laborious efforts on her behalf.

Hour after hour of the long night passed, and still Helen did not sleep. Her body could not rest till she had stilled the tumult of her mind. She must meet Laurence at nine o'clock as though she had not heard this shattering news, and she must prepare herself to endure her aunt's remarks and the com-

ments of all her friends and neighbours, when the engagement should be published.

The hardest battles are those fought in the secret depths of the heart, where no cry is heard, no wound is seen, but we vanquish or are slain, as truly as though we waged our warfare with visible weapons. At seven in the morning, as Helen sat on the edge of the bed, in which she had not lain, her hands lying listlessly crossed on her lap, and her weary dark eyes gazing vacantly, she heard a door open, and someone walk rapidly along the corridor. In a moment her listless attitude was changed, and her eyes grew bright and eager. It was Temple's step; she knew it among a thousand; and her heart told her that he had risen early to bid good-bye to Bessie Jarvis. She went to the window and, drawing aside the blind, looked out. Yes, there he was, walking briskly across the market place in the morning sunshine in the direction of the Shelton Road. Helen smiled

as she turned from the window, but it was a sad smile on a young face. She saw herself in the glass pale and haggard, with dark rings round her tearless eyes, that ached and burnt from their long vigil.

'This will never do,' she said, as she bathed her face in cold water; 'we may suffer, but not a trace of it must be seen.'

And with the resolute strength of youth, and buoyed up by womanly pride, Helen dressed herself with minute and elaborate care, and when she left her room she bore no trace of her night of sleepless pain.

Laurence returned from his morning walk in high spirits, bringing with him into the close little sitting-room at the Crown Inn a waft of the indescribable freshness of the outer air, and carrying in his hand a nosegay of brilliant, golden-yellow flowers with long narrow leaves.

'Good morning, Helen; it is very good of you to see me so early, after the fatigues of

last night. I hope you slept well;' and as he did not wait for a reply, Helen was not put to the trouble of inventing one.

'I have brought you a flower that I have only lately become acquainted with,' said Laurence, offering her the bright golden nosegay; 'its local name is both quaint and pretty. They call it here "Golden rod," or "Farewell summer"' (Bessie had told him this half an hour ago, when she plucked him the flowers). 'By which name shall you choose to call it?'

'I will call it "Farewell summer," for that sounds like a name to signify the end of brightness and happiness,' and Helen took the flowers from him with a ghost of a smile, and bent her head over them, but they had no perfume.

'It has no scent, and that is as it should be with a flower so sadly named, for scent would be like memory, and when summer is over it is no good remembering it any more.'

'I would have brought you a flower with a more cheerful name if I could,' said Laurence with a deprecating expression.

'Indeed, I like both the flower and its name very much, and it was kind of you to bring it me;' and a silence fell which neither of them knew how to break.

'You will give my love to Norah, will you not?' Laurence said abruptly, and then added, with a kindling brightness of expression, 'Will you tell her I am perfectly happy and content in this place? and I want you to do me a great kindness.'

'Yes.'

'It does not sound much, but to me it will mean a great deal. I want you and Norah always to continue the true friends you have been to me, and not to lose faith in me, not to think harshly of me,' and Temple's eyes were fixed beseechingly on Helen.

'Your sister, of course, will always be your

friend; but, so far, you have never put my friendship to the test, and I do not know what strain it would endure. It seems to me that deliberately to try the strength of friendship is like striking a glass to see how much it will bear without cracking,' and she smiled, and lightly struck the vase in which she was putting her nosegay of 'farewell summer,' and it gave out a clear, ringing sound.

'Hark! you hear how strong the glass is; be content and put it to no further proof.'

'That is a very pretty simile of yours, Helen, and the vase, like yourself, rings true and is without a flaw. But your test was too slight; the glass will bear more than that, I am sure;' and he struck the edge of the vase sharply with a penholder, when it cracked and could never again give out a clear, ringing note. Temple laughed at his confidence and clumsiness, but Helen turned pale and said: 'Ah! why have you turned a pretty simile into a bad omen?'

'Forgive me, Helen, for my roughness. If it is a type of my behaviour to my friends, they would do well to shun me.'

'You will lose your train if you stay any longer,' said Helen, looking towards the clock on the mantelpiece.

'Thanks for reminding me; you made me forget the time;' and they shook hands and Temple departed eager and happy, counting the hours till he should return to Shelton.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BOMBSHELL AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

'At this his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head.'—BUNYAN'S *Pilgrim's Progress.*

IT was a lovely morning at that pleasant time of the year when summer and autumn have a brief struggle for supremacy. The cool freshness of the morning, the heavy dew, the veil of silvery mist that enfolds the landscape, promise victory to autumn; but by noon summer reigns triumphant, and the sun beats with more than July fervour on the toilers in the harvest fields. The dark green of the foliage was touched here and there with bronze, and the sweet song of the robin was still a new delight. The lawn before the breakfast-room

windows at Coombe Delaway sparkled with dew, and each separate spider's web on the autumn rose-bushes was a glittering wonder bespangled with liquid diamonds. It was the first of September, a day of greater joy to men than to partridges, and Mr. Stapleton and his keeper had been out since daybreak with but small result, for much of the corn was still uncut, and the birds were wild and strong on the wing. Breakfast was ready; a wood fire blazed cheerfully on the hearth, and Mrs. Stapleton, a comely creature to look upon in her morning freshness, was beguiling the time till her husband's arrival by glancing over the contents of the letter-bag. She smiled with pleased anticipation on a very thick letter directed in Laurence's writing, and bearing the Shelton postmark. They had not heard from her brother for some time, and she supposed that he was making up for past negligence now that he had written.

'What a nuisance to have a pile of letters on the first of September, when I want every moment I can get!' said Mr. Stapleton, as he entered the room and caught sight of the letters laid by his plate. 'I am off directly after breakfast shooting with Sir Stoke, and I shall bring him back to dinner with me.'

'What sport have you had this morning?' asked Mrs. Stapleton, who was interested in the dinner appropriate to the day.

'Oh, little enough; but you are quite safe for your dinner partridges, my dear. The birds are uncommonly wild and strong on the wing,' and he opened Laurence's letter, pushing the others on one side, as his experienced eye saw that they were bills, begging letters, tradesmen's advertisements, and such like impertinences as run a brief career between the post-bag and the waste-paper basket. He spread the letter open beside him, thinking to carry on the treble process of eating his breakfast, talking to his wife, and reading what Laurence

had to say at one and the same time. But he soon laid down his knife and fork, lapsed into silence, took up the letter and read intently. This was what he read :—

'The Crown Inn, Shelton:
'*August* 30, 188—.

'My dear Brother,

'I fear my letter will be like a bomb-shell exploding in the quiet of your breakfast-room. The news I have to tell you will, I know, be displeasing to you, though it would be doubly so if you did not hear it direct from me. You have a right to demand that I should tell you my plans and intentions in life. You have been father and elder brother to me, and I cannot tell you how happy I should be if only I could hope for your sympathy and approval. However, I will no longer beat about the bush, but tell you plainly that I have met with the very woman in the world who fits in with the theory of marriage which I believe in and have ex-

plained to you, and I am going to make her my wife. Do not infer from this bald statement of fact that I am so cold-blooded as to wish to marry for the sake of an experiment, and to realise a theory. No, I am as deeply in love as though I had never had an idea or a theory on the subject. Break it as gently as you can to Norah, that Bessie Jarvis, to whom I am engaged, is the daughter of a market-gardener near Shelton, and that she is, on the father's side, granddaughter to a farm labourer, and on the mother's to a cobbler named Wylie.

'This is a lineage that will give her great pain, I am aware; but if I do not care a brass farthing about my wife's ancestry, I hope she will not take that of her sister-in-law too deeply to heart. Any way, there can't be much room for family pride here, and I shan't have to sit and listen to long yarns about my wife's grandfather the marquis, or her uncle the duke. Tell Norah that my lady-love is

twenty years old, and beautiful as a dream. She is both innocent and ignorant; the innocence may she always keep, the ignorance I shall do my best to dispel, and I shall have the enviable task of cultivating a simple mind and moulding a plastic nature according to my own ideas. This is not easy to do in one's own rank of life, where young ladies are expected to conform to a type approved of by society, and to resemble one another as closely as buttons that are struck off by the gross.

Bessie Jarvis's manners, of course, are unconventional, but they are refined and simple, and if society's hall-mark were stamped upon them, every young lady would endeavour to imitate them.

'I do not intend to introduce her to Norah till I bring her with me as my wife to Coombe Delaway some time, when Bessie will have developed in mind considerably, and will be able to make a more favourable

impression on those who cannot be expected to regard her as I do. I shall be glad to take her away from her parents. They can do her no good, while her mother might do her positive harm.

'For the first few years after we are married I intend to live very quietly on a corner of the little estate my father left me, and there to work out a problem. I mean to test practically, by my own experience and at my own cost, the productive power of a given number of acres of average quality of land, under different crops and different styles of farming. If I live, I shall give seven years to working out the experiment, that I may ascertain accurately how few acres of land in a climate like ours can support a hard-working man and his family. I shall keep account of every farthing I put into the soil, whether in crops or labour, and of every farthing's value I take out of it. At the end of seven years I may hope to know something

about a matter on which men dogmatise in complete ignorance.

'To-morrow I rush up to town to bid God-speed to Borradale, who sails for a year's visit to Australia; then I return to my present quarters, drawn hither by a most powerful magnet. By the way, to my astonishment Lady Poges and Helen appeared on the scene to-day, and they will tell you they have seen me, and very nearly brought my career to an ignominious close by running over me in their big travelling carriage. Give my best love to Norah, to whom I dare not write direct till you have paved the way for a communication.

'Ever yours,

'Laurence Temple.'

'What a long letter from Laurence!' said Mrs. Stapleton; and she looked across the table and saw her husband frowning heavily as he read, and, could it be possible? yes, she heard him mutter, 'Damned folly!'

'Oh, what?' she exclaimed in a terrified voice.

'You shall read for yourself in a moment. Thank heaven he is no son of mine! Norah, you never were properly thankful that you have no children. At least you are saved seeing a son of your own make a confounded fool of himself;' and he tossed her brother's letter to her across the table, and it overshot its mark and fell to the floor, and he did not stir to pick it up for her.

'Oh, do tell me what is in the letter before I read it,' said Norah, as she opened it with a trembling hand.

'Briefly this, my dear; your brother is going to marry the daughter of a market gardener and the granddaughter of a cobbler, and, for all I know, she may be the village idiot as well. There, he told me to break the news to you, and I've done it.' And John Stapleton rose abruptly from his chair, and took up his stand on the hearthrug with his

back to the fire and his hands under his coat-tails.

Mrs. Stapleton turned deadly pale, for an instant her husband thought she must faint; then she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears. John Stapleton was as grieved as his wife could be at the bad news they had just received, and yet he could not restrain a smile at the form in which her sorrow displayed itself.

'Your brother is not dead, my dear,' he said by way of comfort.

'Oh, it's far worse than if he were dead!' she sobbed; 'death is always respectable, but this—this is disgrace, and it may last a lifetime.'

'I always thought your brother was bound to commit some blatant act of folly in practical affairs, because he is a philosopher,' said John Stapleton, gathering his coat-tails under his arms, and leaning his shoulders against the mantelpiece, 'but I hardly ex-

pected it to take such a suicidal form as this.

'Bessie Jarvis, if I have rightly caught her odious name, must be a very designing young person,' said Mrs. Stapleton, wiping her eyes, where tears were now succeeded by dry wrath.

'That is not at all necessary, my dear. She may be almost as simple as your brother. Laurence's mind, for some years past, has inclined to the idea of unequal marriages as a means of welding all classes together, high and low, in bonds of kindly relationship. He has talked to me about it a good deal, and I have always encouraged him to do so, because usually such mental froth melts itself away in talk. He thinks that men of the upper classes should marry women of the lower orders; but he has this lingering ray of common sense left—though how soon that may be quenched I don't know—that he admits the time has not yet come in which women of the upper

classes could marry men of the lower orders with advantage to the common weal,' and Mr. Stapleton smiled sarcastically.

'How can my father's son think such shocking nonsense!' exclaimed Norah Stapleton, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes. Ordinarily Mrs. Stapleton thought but little of her father, and still less of his opinions, and was glad that her brother bore no resemblance to him; but, in this moment of anguish, it seemed to her cruel and unfilial in Laurence to fly in the face of paternal precepts and family tradition.

'Well,' said Mr. Stapleton, as the warmth of the fire blandly diffused itself throughout his frame, 'when we've sworn and cried a little more over this mad folly we shall have to make the best of a bad job. I suppose you don't want to give up your brother?'

'I want to give up Laurence!' replied his wife with animation; 'it is Laurence who is giving us up—yes, and what is almost as bad,

he is giving up Helen Wentworth as well. I call this wretched, low engagement a positive insult to Helen. Imagine a man having known Helen Wentworth for years and then marrying a Bessie Jarvis!' and Mrs. Stapleton pronounced the words with withering scorn, not as though they were the name of a person, but of some degraded type of humanity. 'And he speaks of his indifference to his wife's ancestry,' she continued, renewing her wrath by referring to the letter in her hand; 'ah, here are the very words: "I do not care a brass farthing [you see, he is growing vulgar already] about my wife's ancestry," &c.; "anyway, there can't be much room for family pride here, and I shan't have to sit and listen to tedious yarns about my wife's grandfather the marquis, or her uncle the duke." I hope he may not have to listen to something still more offensive. Unless these Jarvises are different from "all people that on earth do dwell" they have their own family

pride as well as others, and I can't see that it will be pleasanter for Laurence to hear his wife boast that her grandfather was unrivalled at cobbling, or that her father grew the strongest onions in the parish, than to hear her mention her uncle the duke occasionally.'

John Stapleton laughed heartily. 'You show a greater knowledge of human nature, my dear, than I gave you credit for. There certainly is nothing in Bessie Jarvis's ancestry to exclude family pride, as far as I can see, and I hope that your brother may not live to curse the mention both of market gardeners and cobblers, to say nothing of farm labourers also.'

'Till now, I always thought my brother was a gentleman, though he might be peculiar,' said Mrs. Stapleton with a deep sigh.

'Let us be just to Laurence,' replied her husband. 'I am obliged to admit that he strikes me as being never more of a gentleman than he is at the present moment.'

'What, when he is about to make a low marriage with a girl in Betsy—or is it Bessie—Jarvis's position?'

'Yes, my dear, precisely because of this intended marriage, Laurence seems to me to be a gentleman—an excellent, infatuated fool of a gentleman. Consider, if he were not a gentleman, he would not dream of marrying a girl in Bessie's position. He would amuse himself with her, and leave her. But, because your brother is a gentleman, he cannot do this, he must marry her. A fool, no doubt, but, at the same time, a gentleman;' and Mr. Stapleton could not help smiling at his wife's utterly woebegone expression. 'Norah,' he said suddenly, to rouse her from her deep depression, 'Norah, would you rather that your brother acted like a fool, or like a knave?'

'O, John dear, why do you put such fearful alternatives before me? Of course, I am very glad,' she said, with streaming eyes that belied her words, 'of course, I am de-

lighted that Laurence is so honourable; yet a knave may live to repent and mend his ways, but a fool is always a fool, and can't be otherwise.'

'Upon my word, you are an immoral little lady,' said her husband, smiling affectionately at her.

'Poor Helen Wentworth! how will she bear this shocking news?' said Norah, in a disconsolate voice.

'With courage, or I greatly mistake her. All our pretty little castles in the air are demolished now, and I only hope she cares as little for Laurence as he cares for her. What a fool the man is, what a fool!' and he stooped to kiss his wife's forehead, and bade her goodbye as a servant entered the room to say that the dogcart was waiting to take him to Poges Court. Then he added, as Mrs. Stapleton's tears flowed afresh, 'Laurence's letter does not require answering to-day. One cannot congratulate him, and it is too late to offer

advice that was not asked for, and that would not have been taken if it had been. Cheer up, Norah! A year is a long time, and the lovers may quarrel, or die, or a thousand things may prevent the marriage; and, anyway, the whole confounded folly is not worth your shedding a tear.'

CHAPTER XV.

A PARTING AND A MEETING.

The day of Borradale's departure had arrived, and he and Temple were threading their way through the confusion of the crowded deck of the steamship 'Boomerang,' bound for Sydney. The great engines throbbed like the living heart of the huge vessel, and her funnels poured forth volumes of black smoke. There was a rushing to and fro, and a trampling of feet, men shouting, sheep bleating, cocks crowing, and above all was heard the frightened squeal of a nervous thoroughbred as he was slung up over the ship's side with eyes blindfolded. Everywhere, on deck and below, was the impartially penetrating smell of ship—an odour, so far as it can be analysed, found

to consist of the smell of wet paint, hot grease, and tarry ropes, blended in a complicated manner with strange, indefinable seafaring stenches, unknown on shore, but forming for the landsman one of the many terrors of the deep. Among the moving crowd on deck were groups of passengers and their friends, some so hilarious that their mirth seemed of dubious origin, others tear-stained and trembling, clinging silently to some dear one that the great ship was about to bear away from them to the ends of the earth.

'I have hardened myself to the sight of leave-taking,' said Borradale. 'I have very nearly shed sympathetic tears, but it does not do to begin with that kind of thing. I shall entertain myself, after we have sailed, by seeing how soon my fellow-passengers rally after such painful partings. They will be themselves, I suspect, sooner than those will who are left behind. But let us go and have a look at the steerage passengers, and see

how they are accommodated; we shall just have time for it before you have to leave the ship.'

'Let us pay them a visit by all means,' said Temple. 'I have noticed some families on board, evidently emigrants, that I grudged to see leave the country. They must be a good sort of people that have the courage and energy to cross the world in pursuit of the fortune denied them at home; and, though it would be grossly unfair to use our colonies as a field to shoot our rubbish in, yet I cannot help regretting that such fine specimens of men should be turning their backs on the old country.'

In the steerage quarters Temple was soon talking with a middle-aged man, apparently a mechanic, who with his wife and family of all ages, from sixteen years old down to the baby in his arms, was going out to settle in Brisbane.

'No, sir,' said the man, in reply to a ques-

tion of Temple's, 'I've no call to complain of the old country. I've had good work and good wages, and me and the missis had no thought but that we should live and die at home. But it's the children; we done it for the children. We've nine on 'em—strong, healthy boys and girls—and here in England we are getting too thick on the ground, so we're taking 'em out where there's elbow-room for 'em all.'

'Have you to bring any provisions with you?' asked Laurence, looking at a large basket of bread on the wife's arm.

'No, sir, we've emigrants' rations; it's nobbut the last baking of home bread as we've brought for the children to eat while it lasts, for the old country's sake. Bread 'll never taste as sweet in a foreign land,' and the woman wept silently.

'You must not think Australia is a foreign land,' said Laurence soothingly; 'it is only another and a larger England across the sea,

where our comfortable English tongue is spoken, and where you, and such a family as yours, will be very welcome.'

'I hope so, sir; and if me and the father don't feel at home over there, why the children 'll learn to, and we're going for their sakes. But it's the graves we're leaving behind us—I shall never feel at home where I can't see my father and mother's graves,' and her tears flowed afresh.

'Come now, don't you take on like that, or you'll set the children off again,' said her husband in a menacing tone. Then turning to Laurence he said, as he dandled the baby on his arm, 'I'm obliged to speak sharp to her, just to pull her together a bit. I've had something to do with her, I can tell you.'

Meanwhile Borradale interested himself in watching a leave-taking between a thin, elderly woman and her daughter, a fine stalwart young woman of about five and twenty

years of age. Her mother kissed her repeatedly, and took the woollen scarf from her own meagre neck to put it round her daughter's plump shoulders, and now she was giving her a parting word of advice.'

'Keep yourself decent, my wench; say a prayer at night, for you can take care of yourself in the daylight; and don't give in to the drink, and keep your feet dry, and God 'll do the rest for you.'

But the daughter's reply did not seem to have any bearing on the maternal counsel, for all that Borradale heard her say was, 'There's lots of men where I'm going, mother; there's a deal more men in Australia than there is here.'

And now the clamorous ringing of the bell announced that all strangers must leave the vessel. Temple and Borradale walked the deck arm in arm for the last time, promising to write to one another regularly, and already looking forward to meeting again.

'I feel a brute among all these good people leaving England with such heavy hearts, while I am merely taking a pleasure-trip,' said Borradale, as he grasped Temple's hand. 'God bless you, Temple, my dear, dear friend! Remember me to Bessie Jarvis. I suppose it would be hardly polite to tell her what a lucky girl I think her.'

'No, I am the one to be congratulated, so I shall only deliver the first part of your message. I hope we shall be married before you return. Good-bye, my dear fellow, good-bye, and God bless you,' and he wrung his friend's hand, and, moved by the partings around him, his eyes filled, and he saw Borradale through a mist.

'Be off, Temple, be off! I hate saying good-bye; it's a bad word. Au revoir!' and Laurence Temple turned abruptly away, and joined the departing throng that crowded down the gangway, at the foot of which he was pushed against Tim Ballinger.

'You here, Tim! You are not going to Australia, I hope?'

'No, sir; you and me are here on the same errand, I expect, starting a friend off. I see you on deck just now with a gentleman; he's looking at you, sir, over the side.'

And Temple stood with Ballinger and saw the gangway drawn up, and he watched the yearning faces hanging over the bulwarks; hats and handkerchiefs were waved, and loving greetings sent to friends who stood at the water's edge, as the big ship slowly steamed away. At first the movement was almost imperceptible, then the dark strip of water between the vessel and the dock-side grew wider every instant, and the steamer was threading her way among the shipping in the river. A ringing cheer burst from the crowd on shore, answered by one as loud from the deck of the 'Boomerang,' and Borradale stood waving his hat as long as Temple could see him.

At that instant the sun broke through the clouds in full splendour; the murky atmosphere became a golden haze, and the black river, transformed into a shining wonder, bore on its burnished waters a phantom ship, whose very funnels and smoke were glorified in the shining light. Temple still waved his hat towards the bright spot where he knew that Borradale stood, for every object on deck, and every rope and spar of the rigging, were transfigured in the golden light, and lost in shining glory. Men ceased to cheer, and silently raised their hats, women wept softly and held up their children to see the wondrous sight, and the forgeman heaved a tempestuous sigh as he said, 'Don't it look a'most like sailing to the kingdom of heaven?' Temple waved his hat once more, and, without waiting to see the glory depart, and the disenchanted vessel restored to her own proper ugliness, turned away, and slipping his arm through Ballinger's, he said:

'I hope that ship takes away no one that you care for, Tim?'

'Not a bit of it, sir,' replied Tim, tightening his woollen comforter round his neck; 'I've been more like a policeman to the chap I've seen off than anything else. It's a wastrel nephew o' Mrs. Brimer's as we're shipping off. He won't do no work here, so we're sending him where he'll starve if he don't work.'

'It is to be hoped that the Australian climate will produce a change in him, Tim; but I'm afraid laziness is a disease bred in the bone, and not to be cured by change of air.'

'Well, we've give him one more chance, sir, and it'll be the last. We've found the money to send him out, and put a pound or two in his pocket when I'd got him past the publics safe aboard; and now I don't hope to see his face no more, not unless he changes a good bit for the better.'

Temple knew very well who the 'we' was

that had provided money for the ne'er-do-well's voyage.

'Will you come with me and be my guest to-night at my hotel, Tim? We will dine directly we get in, and go to the theatre afterwards and enjoy ourselves,' said Laurence, when they were in the train on their way from the docks to the city. Tim hesitated to reply.

'You can be off as early as you like in the morning,' Temple urged.

'It isn't that as I'm thinking of, sir, but London ain't Smokington, and I shouldn't like you to be vexed if any of your friends was to see you at the theatre along of a chap like me.'

Temple laughed. 'Tim, if you don't mind being seen in my company, I am sure I don't care who my friends see me with, and I'll introduce you to the first of them we meet.'

'No, sir, you won't, not if I know it; but

I'll be proud and happy to come along with you.'

When they alighted, after their brief journey, at a city terminus, the two men walked together in the direction of St. Paul's Churchyard, in the neighbourhood of which was Temple's hotel. From the moment of accepting Temple's invitation Tim Ballinger had become constrained and reserved. He was in a position to which he was wholly unaccustomed, and he dimly felt that he ought somehow to comport himself differently, though in what manner he should do so he did not know. It was his first visit to London, and he was bewildered by the roar and crowd of the city, which did not at all resemble Smokington during the races, or even Birmingham at the time of the cattle show, the only towns and occasions on which Tim had been jostled in a thronged street. Tim Ballinger, who could hear a pin drop amid the thumping and banging of an iron-works, was deafened by

the roar of the city traffic. When Temple shouted to him, he either did not hear him or else misunderstood him so hopelessly that he gave up all attempts at conversation, and mutely steered him through the crowd, and led him over the crossings, firmly grasping him by the arm. Tim never thought about the dangers of his own trade, but he was so impressed by the perils of the city streets, that as Temple brought him uninjured over a wide thoroughfare, crossing in a slanting direction under horses' heads and among the wheels of omnibuses, he exclaimed, 'Thank the Lord that the little wench and Mrs. Brimer is safe at home!'

When at length they entered the hotel, which Tim regarded as a veritable harbour of refuge, Temple took him into the coffee-room, and seating him opposite to himself at a small table, asked him if his walk had given him an appetite, and if he was ready for his dinner? The mention of dinner suf-

ficed to rouse Tim Ballinger from his shy and uneasy frame of mind.

'I'm always ready for my dinner,' he said, simply. 'There's bin only one day in my life when I couldn't eat 'im, and that was when I see my mate crushed under the hammer. But I eat double tides next day to make up for it.'

Temple handed the bill of fare across the table to him. 'You will choose your dinner from the list of dishes on this card, Tim, and then I will choose mine.'

Now Tim Ballinger had never seen a bill of fare before; so he laid it on the table the better to study it, and, bending over it with a most intent expression, slowly drew his broad forefinger down it till he came to a word that he knew, when he pressed it so hard that he left a black mark opposite 'steak and kidney pudding.'

'I know 'im; I'll have 'im,' said Tim, showing the card to the waiter, who with

the badge of his order, a napkin tucked under the left arm, stood beside him to receive his commands.

'Won't you begin your dinner with a little soup or fish?' suggested Temple.

'Soup's not filling enough,' replied Tim, briefly.

'It is not intended to fill you; it is merely a sort of foundation for the more solid part of the dinner that comes afterwards.'

'Won't the pudding get cold while I'm eating my soup?' asks Tim, eyeing the waiter doubtfully.

'No, sir, certainly not, sir; what soup shall I bring you?' and he pointed to the list of soups on the card for Tim's guidance. Again Tim's eye lighted on a word that he knew, and he brightened up as though he had caught sight of a friend's familiar face among a crowd of strangers.

'Pea soup! I know 'im. I'll have 'im!'

Laurence watched Tim Ballinger with amusement mingled with awe. He made a wonderful dinner. He enjoyed his pea soup so much that he ordered the astonished waiter to bring him a second plateful, into which he crumbled about half-a-pound of new bread. Tim skipped the second course altogether, because he found no mention on the bill of fare of his favourite fish, the bloater, and he was void of enterprise in venturing upon the unknown. Therefore, immediately after his soup he ate the whole of a respectable-sized steak and kidney pudding, with bread again, many potatoes, and a variety of hot pickles. He next partook freely of broiled steak, with yet more potatoes, as though it were altogether a new idea, and he had never met with such a vegetable before. Then followed two large slices of sirloin of beef, and this time the inevitable potatoes were largely accompanied by cabbage. It will be seen that Tim Ballinger had no originality of mind, no power of exer-

cising choice amid variety. Tim's idea of a dinner was simply beef, more beef, and yet more beef, and though the bill of fare offered him a dozen other meats, it never occurred to him, by partaking of them, to depart from his preconceived notion of dining.

While he waited for the plum-pudding, which seemed to him the most attractive item in the list of sweets, he had leisure to notice that Laurence Temple's dinner consisted of an omelette, with which he was drinking mineral water. Tim had a soft heart, and he was moved to compassion.

'Why, Mr. Temple, that's never how you live! You've had no beef, and nothing but water to drink! I couldn't keep body and soul together on such light stuff!'

Temple thought it depended on what kind of body and soul one was anxious to keep together, and he fully recognised the fact that Tim Ballinger, desiring to be what he was, was well advised in his diet.

'I am a strong man, Tim, even though I take this light stuff.'

'Don't tell me, sir,' said Tim, with an incredulous shake of the head. 'You couldn't stand and work at a puddling furnace with nothing stronger than eggs and water for belly-timber.'

After the plum-pudding Tim ate what would in itself have been a hearty meal of bread and cheese and celery and beer, then, pushing his chair from the table, and drawing the back of his hand across his mouth, which was garnished with a light moustache of foam, he said, by way of grace, 'Many a man's made a worse dinner than that.'

'Well, Tim, how soon shall you be ready to turn out?' for it seemed to Temple that it would be a physical impossibility for him to stir for a couple of hours or more.

'I'm ready now, sir,' said Tim springing to his feet. 'I never sit after my dinner only on Sundays.'

While Tim Ballinger steadily plodded on with his dinner, for the most part in silence, Temple had looked at the evening papers to see what plays were being acted at the principal theatres, and he had chosen a sensational melodrama as being most certain to interest and delight his guest. Nor was he wrong in his surmise, for, throughout the entire length of a play filled with thrilling incident and lasting nearly four hours, Tim listened and looked with breathless interest, and applauded every generous sentiment till the house rang.

For Temple it was entertainment enough to watch his companion, whose emotions were actively worked upon by all that he saw and heard, and who was too unsophisticated to attempt to hide his feelings. There was a burglary, a shipwreck, an elopement, a railway accident, an utterly unprovoked murder, and a mere tame, ordinary death-bed scene in the play, and Tim was as agitated and excited as

though he were a witness in sober reality of each thrilling event. But his adoring admiration of the heroine of the drama, who wore a most palpable tow wig, was delightful to behold. Tim gaped upon her open-mouthed, unmanned and enervated by her charms, and shook his fist repeatedly at her father, who did not appear to be under the spell of her beauty and spoke roughly to her. But when the lovely being, in a thin, high voice, sang 'Home, sweet Home' from the frail balcony of a cottage near a wood, the forgeman's softer emotions asserted themselves, and Tim wept till his handkerchief was reduced to a moist ball of blue cotton. It would be fine to sit at home by the fireside at night and tell Mrs. Brimer and the little wench all about the murder and the railway accident and the beautiful young lady! But no, he forgot, this could not be. Mrs. Brimer did not approve of youth in her own sex, nor of beauty either, which she regarded as a

baiting of man-traps and a whitening of sepulchres, so he would be compelled to enshrine the lovely vision in his own heart; he could not speak of it to unsympathetic ears.

Late in the evening, when they had returned to their hotel, Tim modestly hinted at his habit of taking supper, and while he cut slice after slice from a mountain of cold spiced beef, Laurence asked him how matters were getting on at the works.

'Why, I'm thinking we shall have a row there afore long with that Anslow; the gift of the gab's the order of the day now, seemingly, and a chap that can keep on blethering and spouting like him 'll draw more fools after him than a man as works hard and steady 'll ever get to follow his way o' thinking.'

'What is Anslow wanting you to do now?'

'Why, it's i' this way, sir. We've had a turn of bad trade nigh four years now, and

all that time our master, Mr. Calder, has kept us at a fixed wage, and most of the time it's been a higher wage than what others has paid for the same work in our part of the country. Things is a bit better now, or going to be, and there's been a rise at some of the works where they'd had lower wages than us most of the bad times. Then Anslow, he says, Calder ought to rise us too; but he says "No, I can't do that, not at present; I've paid you a higher wage through them bad times that's only now on the turn, and you must wait a bit for a rise to give me a chance, for I'm more out o' pocket than the other masters as paid a lower wage when times was bad and work slack." That's all square, ain't it, sir?' said Tim, raising his eyes for a moment from the beef on his plate to look inquiringly at Temple.

'So far as I can judge from the facts, it sounds fair and honest.'

'Well, Anslow says it ain't, and we must

go for a rise immediate, and I says, "But Calder never dropt our wages when they was falling all round, and we must give him a chance now. Don't you see, you great fool, that to strike now 'ud be killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, and very like ruin a man as has dealt true and honest by us? You forget," I says, "them times when there was trouble enough all round us, and works as has a bigger name than Calder's was playing two days a week regular, as we had work constant and a higher wage than them." But you can't argify with a chap like him,' said Ballinger in a tone of deep disgust; 'he's all wind and words, same as a ranter preacher.'

'Do you think he will be able to persuade a majority of Calder's men to strike?'

'I expect he will, sir. You see, there's a deal of fools everywhere, and they don't like argiment; they just want a chap to keep on braying at 'em, and Anslow's the man to do it. And he ain't square, neither. Twice in them

years as Calder never dropt his wage he took and dropt his underhand's wage, I know.'

'What will happen if there's a strike, Tim?'

'Why, we shall all be throwed out o' work along of his blethering talk, and while he's grabbing after a rise as 'll come soon anyhow, the works 'll be shut, and we must play till Calder or us gives in, and all the time not a penny of wage coming in,' and Tim Ballinger brought his fist down heavily on the table.

'Yes, Anslow seems to be a fool, Tim.'

'He's worse than a fool, sir, he's a rogue; it's them that he leads away that's fools.'

And now that Tim had told his friend the news of his world, Temple wished to make a confidence in return. He wanted to tell him of his engagement to Bessie Jarvis; it was unfriendly not to mention it, and yet, if he explained to him the peculiar circumstances of it, he feared he should meet with

little sympathy. For Temple had been surprised to find that Tim Ballinger's views on social matters were in some respects as rigid as those of any high-born gentleman. On the few occasions on which he had tried to lead up to the subject of his engagement by broaching his favourite theory for the regeneration of society, Tim had listened to him with so much indifference and incredulity that it had effectually silenced Temple. So this time he went through no preliminaries, but said simply, 'Tim, I have some news for you—I am going to be married.'

'I wish you every happiness, sir, I'm sure. My father had used to say as a man was only half a man till he'd got him a wife. I suppose you've felt lonely, and I'll say for you, sir, that the best and most sweet-spoken lady among 'em all isn't too good for you.'

'My wife will certainly be sweet spoken, Tim, for she has a soft voice, but she is not what you generally understand by the term

"a lady," though she is one most truly. She is the daughter of a market gardener, and her grandfather is a cobbler.'

'You going to marry a gardener's daughter, sir!' said Tim in some perplexity.

'And why not, Tim?'

'Well, queerer things have happened, but I should as soon ha' thought o' me marrying the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter as you marrying beneath you, sir.'

'But I do not consider that I am marrying beneath me as you call it. You know, Tim, that I think gentlemen ought to marry in a lower rank than their own, to bind all classes together in kindly relationship.'

'And ought we working men to marry ladies, if they'll have us, sir?'

Temple changed colour, and felt very uncomfortable. He did not think that time was ripe for such marriages, but he did not wish to hurt his friend's feelings by expressing his opinion.

'You see, Tim,' he began with some hesitation, 'that is a very different thing; ladies are so delicately reared that they would not make the best kind of wives for working men, and——'

'Well, sir, it seems to me,' interrupted Tim, 'that the marriages as you speak up for gives you gentlemen more liberty than you've got a'ready, and makes you free to choose your wives from the pick of our young women, as well as from your own, but we working men mustn't marry your sisters and daughters, they're made o' too fine clay for us. No, sir, I don't think as your plan's fair and equal.'

CHAPTER XVI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

'Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman,
I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.'
Julius Cæsar.

Now that Laurence Temple was the accepted and acknowledged lover of Bessie Jarvis, though he did not repent the bold step he had taken in assuming the position, he began to realise a little of what it involved. For Bessie herself he felt ardent admiration and undiminished affection, though he could have wished that she was a trifle quicker in taking in a fresh idea, or that she made any visible progress under his tuition. But her family tried him severely. At the present moment he held in his hand a note from her mother,

wonderfully written and abnormally spelt, inviting him to dinner on Sunday next, at one o'clock, to meet her father, Mr. Wylie, the retired cobbler, who had come over from Hereford for a few days, and she signed herself 'Your well-wisher, Mrs. Jarvis.' If Norah Stapleton had read that note addressed to her brother, she would have fainted on the spot.

Laurence dreaded both the dinner and the introduction to old Mr. Wylie exceedingly, and he was vexed at his own inconsistency in shrinking from accepting Mrs. Jarvis's hospitality. For had he not chosen her daughter and the aged cobbler's granddaughter for his wife, and was he not bound during the dread period of his courtship to accept the civilities of the Jarvis family as though they were socially his equals? He certainly was; and he must not pain Bessie by letting her see what he suffered from her family. When once he was married it would be different. He would take away his young wife from all

her distasteful surroundings, to train and mould her in accordance with his own ideas. Laurence regarded Bessie's whole complex being as her father would regard a seedling in his garden, which only needed transplanting to a more congenial soil, and judicious tending, to grow into any form that the skilful gardener wished it to assume. He had purposely never yet taken a meal at the cottage, and he saw as little of Bessie's parents as possible. But now that Mrs. Jarvis had sent him a formal invitation he was compelled to accept it, and never did lover set forth in deeper dejection of spirit to encounter his sweetheart's family than did Laurence on that fine Sunday morning.

Courage! It will only be for once, and you have borne more than this for Bessie's sake already. Fortune was kind to him, for before he reached the cottage he was cheered by a sight of the beautiful girl for whose sake he underwent such inglorious suffering. Bessie was returning from church with her grand-

father, and they were slowly crossing the stubble fields in the hot September sunshine. The old man wore his Sunday black suit, which was very tight in the sleeves, and sent a shower of wrinkles across his stooping shoulders when he lifted his shaking hand to his warm face, and his granddaughter stept by his side straight and lithe as a poplar, her well-balanced figure and buoyant step being very pleasant to behold. She wore a simple pink cotton dress, and a broad white muslin hat, beneath which her golden hair and pure soft tints shone with virginal freshness. In her gloveless hands she carried a prayer-book wrapped in her folded pockethandkerchief, together with a bunch of Michaelmas daisies. She was a picture of simple beauty, and as Laurence's eyes rested fondly upon her he thought that, if Norah and John Stapleton could see her then, they would admit that, viewing life as he did, he had chosen his wife well. Bessie and her grandfather had been

to church by themselves, for Mrs. Jarvis had stayed at home to cook the dinner, and she had kept little Jack with her, as she knew full well from past experience that his behaviour during the Litany was such as no great grandfather who retained the use of his faculties could possibly overlook.

Terah Davies had spent the morning smoking in his garden, flicking the aphidæ off the late roses with his crooked fingers, or breathing on them a puff of his strong tobacco, and watching them drop stupefied to the earth. Since he had grown a more prosperous man, and had built three cottages on the Shelton Road, Terah Jarvis often found urgent claims upon him in his garden on a Sunday morning. Sometimes a climbing plant that on Saturday evening needed no human help by ten o'clock on Sunday morning had reached a crisis in its growth demanding immediate attention, and could not possibly wait till the next day for the necessary stakes and supports.

Or it might be that Terah wished to cultivate the acquaintance of his pigs in a more intimate and leisurely way than the hurry and the bustle of the week allowed ; but whatever the nature of his Sunday morning occupation it invariably coincided with the hours of divine service. That time being past Terah felt no more pressure upon him, but spent the rest of the day in purely holiday fashion. He had just washed his hands at the pump, 'swilled' he called it, and wiped them with his clean Sunday handkerchief, put on his coat, and pulled the cuffs down over his knuckles, when, after glancing across the fields, he went to the front door, and shouted, 'Mother, there's father and Bessie and Mr. Temple coming over the fields, as hungry as hunters, I'll be bound.'

And a shrill voice replied from within, 'Then keep 'em talking outside, father, while I brown the fat, and press the greens ; for Bessie shall have all holiday to-day, with her grandfather and her sweetheart here.'

Terah Jarvis walked down the garden path to open the wicket gate, and to do the honours to his guest.

'Come in, Mr. Temple, come in, and welcome. You've been meeting Bessie and her grandfather, I see. You and him 'll get on fine together. He's your sort, Mr. Temple, tho' p'r'aps not to call edicated; but he's always findin' fault, and wanting folks and things to be summat or other as they ain't. He's thought a deal, has father. They do say it goes with the shoemaking.'

'Aye,' said old Wylie in a tremulous voice, as he seated himself on the bench in the porch, and threw his red cotton handkerchief in a ball into his hat, and slowly placed it under the seat, 'aye, if you'd spent more'n fifty years on a shoemaker's bench, with the heel of a Wellington boot fixed in the pit o' your stomach, you'd find it 'ud make you thoughtful.'

As none of his hearers were in a position

to deny this assertion it was received in silence, and the old man continued, with much shaking of the head, 'Aye, aye, fifty years on a shoemaker's bench, and saved enough to be beholden to no one; I can come and see my darter when I've a mind to, and go away home when I've seed enough of her. And I think as I could make a pair o' shoes now, if it wasn't for this shaking o' my thumbs.'

'Well, Mr. Wylie,' said Temple, 'suppose you make Bessie a pair of shoes, just for fancy work. I'm sure she would be proud to be married in shoes of her grandfather's making, and I can assure her she would have had to wait a long time before a grandfather of mine could have made her a pair of shoes.'

'D'ye hear that, Bessie, d'ye hear that, lass?' said the old man, laughing till he cried. 'You may wed with the gentry, but you'd have to go barefoot if you waited for them to make your shoon;' and he stooped and groped for his handkerchief to wipe his streaming eyes.

At that instant little Jack stepped into the porch from the kitchen, in a clean round pinafore, his fat cheeks red and shining from a recent application of cold water and yellow soap, and bidding them come to dinner in these words, 'Grandmother says it's all on, and there'll be gooseberry wind after dinner, and I'm to 'ave some of 'im.'

Bessie took Jack's fat hand, resembling a miniature boxing-glove in shape, and went into the house with him, and when her father and his guests entered the little parlour, she was setting a dish before her mother, who was already seated at the table. Laurence followed Bessie's gentle womanly movements with quiet pleasure, as she placed a footstool for her grandfather, and tied a napkin round little Jack's neck, before she seated herself opposite her lover. Laurence preferred this to sitting beside her, for Bessie was always a charming object to contemplate, while conversation was not easy to her, and by maintaining a wise and becoming

silence she availed herself of a handsome woman's privilege of contributing nothing to the general entertainment.

Terah Jarvis took off his coat before he sat down to carve the savoury loin of veal before him, and, tapping the handle of his knife on the table, he looked at his little grandson, and said, 'Now, Jack, tune up with your grace.' And Jack pressed his fat palms together, and closed his eyes, though his eyelids flickered, as if a strong wind blew in them, while he quavered a verse to a tune best known to himself. When he had finished his little croon, everyone said 'Amen,' and thought what a clever little Jack it was.

'Now, Mr. Temple, let me give you a bit of the fat and the kidney along with the meat. Mother's taken extra pains to brown her fat to-day because you was coming.'

'Thank you, but I do not eat meat.'

Every mouth opened visibly from extremity of astonishment, and old Mr. Wylie

fixed his dim eyes on Temple, who sat next to him, and said slowly, 'Lord a' marcy on you, what do you live on?'

'I live on the same food that you do, excepting meat only. I shall have an excellent dinner of some peas and potatoes, and that good bread that Bessie makes so well.'

'Dear me!' said Mrs. Jarvis, in deepest disappointment, 'if I could ha' guessed as you never touched meat it would ha' taken the heart out o' me roasting that lovely bit o' veal only for ourselves when all's done.'

'Do you know as that roast veal was running about in Farmer Willet's field last Sunday?' said little Jack, with wide open blue eyes, and pointing at the joint with his stumpy forefinger. 'It was a bull calf, and he tried to suck my arm down his throat, he did.'

'You hold your tongue, with your tales and your talk,' said his grandmother, slapping the boy's fat hand.

'It's 'ard to be 'it for speaking the truth,'

said Terah, looking with pride at his grandson, 'and if I hadn't come up and ketched the calf a clout on the head he'd a mauled the child a good bit. But you've got him now, Jack; stick your knife in him,' and he shook with silent laughter.

'Children be a'most too 'cute for me nowadays,' said old Mr. Wylie, shaking his head to and fro. 'They put a deal of book learning in their 'eads, and make 'em a deal cleverer, I dare say, but no better than they'd ought to be. There's Board schools 'ere and Board schools there, and folks is taxed to pay for teaching other folks' childern to write bad words on blank walls. Forbid as I should go so far as say we didn't know no bad words when I was a boy, but, leastways, we couldn't write 'em. We said 'em one to another, and trusted to our memories.'

'But it isn't all bad that children learn nowadays, Mr. Wylie. Look at little Jack; how nicely he has sung grace,' said Temple,

torn with inward laughter. 'I suppose he learnt that at school?'

'Aye, he learnt that at school,' said his grandmother, 'and a great deal else as is very good. He's got his own Testament, father, and he can say a good bit of it, 'ere and there, by 'eart, he can.'

'I doubt he don't understand it, then,' said the old man, continuing his dolorous head-shaking. 'Who's to think much of his Bible nowadays, I should like to know, when every child's got one, and you can buy it a'most as cheap as bacon. I say as a man don't value what he don't give much for, and if we bought our Bibles as dear as our boots we should think more on 'em;' and he looked round the table as much as to say, 'I should like to see who'll contradict that,' and then he buried his face in a large earthenware mug and took a deep draught of cider.

'You don't think we can have too many copies of the Bible, do you?' asked Temple,

willing to hear more of Mr. Wylie's views, and reflecting that while the old man was talking Terah Jarvis would be silent. 'You don't think we can have too many Bibles?'

'I don't know about that, sir. What I says, and what I holds to, is as a man don't value what he can have dirt cheap. Didn't I see little Jack there a hammering nails in the floor with a fi'penny tin-edged Testament? My word, if I'd ha' dared to use the Bible for a hammer when I was a boy my mother would ha' let me know! But Bibles wasn't cheap then, and there was but one to a family, and we thought a deal more of 'em for not being so common. We had to save up then to buy a Bible, we had, and it weighed pretty nigh a half 'underdweight when you'd got it; and it lay on the best parlour table all by itself, with a cloth over it, and a flower-pot with summat growing in it atop, and I should like to ha' seen a child as 'ud dare to touch it. The Word o' God was the Word o' God, I

can tell you, when I was a boy,' and Mr. Wylie proceeded to take snuff with a tremulous eagerness that scattered the pungent powder on his own and on his neighbour's knees.

'O Mr. Temple, what are we to do? There's grandfather snuffin' your knees. You must please t'excuse 'im. He's getting to a very troublesome age—eighty-one come Martinmas. Bessie, bring a cloth to dust this nasty snuff off Mr. Temple's knees.'

Bessie looked with heightened colour from her mother to Laurence, to see whom she must obey, for he said quietly, 'Never mind me, Mrs. Jarvis; we shall make Mr. Wylie uncomfortable if we draw attention to his little accident.'

'Ah! you don't know grandfather,' said Mrs. Jarvis, nodding her head till the red cotton poppies in her cap waved freely; 'why, he wouldn't mind if all the victuals on the table was a inch deep in snuff, so long

as enough reached his nose to make a sneeze.'

Bessie was now growing very uncomfortable on Temple's account, and she suggested to her father that they should have the apples and walnuts out in the garden instead of in the little hot parlour, where they never really felt at home but like visitors in their own house. Thankful for any diversion that should check Mrs. Jarvis's flow of conversation, if only for a few minutes, Temple rose and helped Bessie to carry chairs and a small table into the garden, while her father said, 'Aye, my lass, it'll be a deal fresher out o' doors than here.'

When they were seated under the spreading beech, Temple sitting as far from old Mr. Wylie as possible, Terah Jarvis said to his wife, in a spirit of reckless hospitality, 'Mother, let's have a bottle of your best old gooseberry to drink Mr. Temple's health in, and it'll do grandfather good to have a drop too. Old

folks is none too warm, even on a summer's day.'

'Call this a summer's day! Why, there ain't no summers at all nowadays,' said the old man testily. 'When I was young the seasons knowed what they was arter. Summer come in in June wi' thunder, and went out in October wi' night frosses, and the haymakers dropt dead i' the fields wi' sunstroke regular.'

'Then I should think these seasons is a deal safer, father,' said Terah Jarvis, filling his pipe in a leisurely Sunday-afternoon style. 'Old folks is very rum, Mr. Temple,' he continued, without lowering his voice on Mr. Wylie's account; 'everything they look back on when they was young looks uncommon big and fine to 'em, and everything that's going on under their nose ain't hardly worth looking at. I suppose it'll be the same with us when we come to be his age,' he said slowly, as he watched the first curl of smoke rising from his pipe. 'I dessay when we comes to

grandfather's 'ears, and gets telling anyone as'll listen to us about what we're a-doing on to-day, we shall tell 'em as we sat down twenty to dinner, and ate apples as big as pumpkins, sitting under a tree that high as nobody ever see the top of it.'

Old Mr. Wylie did not appear to hear these remarks, and Temple wondered through what dim fields his thoughts were straying.

'"Now, Mr. Temple, let me pour you out a glass of our own home-made. You didn't drink no cider with your dinner, and I'd forgot that gentlefolks' drink is wind, or I'd have had the gooseberry up then.'

'Thank you, you are most hospitable, and I regret to appear so ungracious as to be obliged to decline wine as well as meat, but indeed I take neither.'

If Temple's refusal to take meat had caused dismay and astonishment at the dinner table, his declining to take wine completed the discomfiture of his host and hostess. How

could they be at their ease with a man of such uncomfortable and incomprehensible habits, a man for whom meat and wine not only had no attractions but, for all they could tell, might even be disgusting to him? No difference of race or of creed could have placed Laurence Temple so hopelessly beyond Terah Jarvis's sympathy and comprehension as this alienating indifference to meat and stimulant. He paused, with the bottle in his hand, and a look of genuine dismay on his face.

'Why, Mr. Temple, you're never one o' them blue ribboners?' and Terah's voice faltered as he spoke.

'No, I'm my own man,' replied Laurence, smiling at the consternation he had so innocently created, 'I belong to no society of vegetarians or of total abstainers, though I take neither meat nor wine. These are merely my own personal habits, which cannot be of interest to anyone, and I don't ask or expect

others to forego ordinary articles of diet because I do not take them myself.'

'You have taken a load off my mind, Mr. Temple,' said Terah, who had been looking anxiously at his daughter pending Laurence's reply. 'You've spoke like a gentleman, and I'm sure you'll never try to make our Bessie go without her meat or her beer. Look at her, Mr. Temple. That frame was never reared on cabbage and water, nor it can't be kep' up upon it neither.'

'If I could only persuade you to take ever such a little taste o' this gooseberry wind o' my own making I should be proud,' broke in Mrs. Jarvis, to try what coaxing would do with their uncomfortable guest. 'Do try it, Mr. Temple. Mr. Borradale was very partial to it, and there isn't a headache in a hogshead of it; it's a'most as good as medicine.'

'Thank you, even with that recommendation I must decline it,' Laurence replied in his coldest tones.

'Well, Mr. Temple, every man to his own taste, so long as he don't want to force it on his neighbours; though how anyone who isn't under oaths not to can say no to a glass o' mother's gooseberry wind I don't pretend to say,' said Terah Jarvis, pouring himself a large glass full of his favourite beverage.

Bessie grew crimson, and dared not look in Laurence's direction, but she knew it was useless to attempt to silence her father; nothing but sudden death could prevent him from having his say out when once he had begun.

'My life!' he continued, 'I'd rather keep you for a month than I'd keep Job Tolley for three days. No one misses a bit o' green stuff and a drop o' water; it's what a beggar wouldn't say thank you for; it's no more than the caterpillars takes, and the Lord made them as well as us, and if a man chooses to feed like one of 'em why it's his own look out. But Job Tolley eats and drinks enough to

keep a small fam'ly. Why, if that isn't Job Tolley 'is very self,' said Terah, looking over his shoulder as he heard the click of the garden latch, 'and nobody wants 'im, I'm sure. He'd ought to 'a seen we'd company, mother,' and he cast a glance of mingled perplexity and annoyance at his wife.

'Hullo, Mr. Jarvis!' said Job Tolley, removing a very bad cigar from his lips as he spoke. 'You're nice and cool in 'ere. I saw you'd a party as I come along, and, as you'd forgotten to ask me, I've invited myself;' and he laughed at his own wit, and looking round the table he stared familiarly at Bessie and her mother.

'I'll take a chair; sitting's as cheap as standing, they say,' and he took little Jack's chair that the child had left, and seated himself by Mrs. Jarvis, who looked coldly upon him.

'Mr. Tolley,' said she, drawing herself up abruptly, and imparting a short nodding

motion to the flowers in her cap, 'Mr. Tolley, when folks has a party, they in general wishes to be private.'

'Then they should sit in the 'ouse with the door shut,' replied the undaunted Tolley, helping himself to the walnuts.

'Who are your friends, Mrs. Jarvis? They're strangers to me, but I can guess who the young gentleman is,' and he cast a most unpleasant look at Bessie and at Temple.

Laurence, who sometimes fondly imagined that he had entered into the region of perpetual calm, where his soul would never more be ruffled by the disturbing influence of personal dislike, felt a sudden flash of hatred within him, more even than he could account for by the vulgarity and disgusting familiarity of Job Tolley. Temple, who ignored social distinctions, honouring what was worthy of honour wherever he met with it, and, what is more rare, scorning what was base, though it were disguised with all that the world wor-

ships, felt that Job Tolley was a man to be looked down upon, wherever he had met him, and whoever he had been.

Tolley took off his hat, and running a moist red hand through his moist red hair said very rudely, looking at Laurence, 'So that is your Mr. Temple, is it?'

Laurence rose, and saying to Mrs. Jarvis, 'I am afraid I have stayed too long, I will wish you good afternoon,' bowed to the little company generally, and walked down the garden path, followed by Bessie to open the gate for him.

'Bessie, who is that fellow?' he said in a hard voice.

Bessie's cheeks flushed and her eyes fell beneath his. 'His name's Job Tolley,' she said under her breath.

'What is he?'

'He's head shopman at Harbottle's cheese and butter shop in Shelton.'

'Do you know that he is a detestable cad?'

said Temple, vengefully striking off the head of a daisy with his cane as he spoke.

'You don't expect a cheese and butterman to be a gentleman, do you, Mr. Temple?'

'You don't understand what I so often tell you, that it is neither birth, position, nor wealth, nor all three together that makes a gentleman in the true meaning of the word, but certain qualities of the heart, of courtesy, gentleness, and respect for women, and these Tolley might have as strongly as any man. Bessie, that fellow looked at you in a way that he deserved knocking down for, whether he were a duke or a cheesemonger.'

'He meant no harm,' said Bessie with sullen reserve.

'I am a better judge of that than you can be, and I do not choose to have you subjected to the looks and remarks of a fellow like that.'

Bessie, still glowing with colour, looked down and said nothing.

'Good-bye, my Bessie, good-bye,' said

Laurence suddenly in a milder voice, as though he felt the futility of further remark on the subject, and was afraid lest his anger should betray him into saying more than the contemptible incident was worth.

'Good-bye, Mr. Temple,' she replied briefly, and closed the door after him with a sharp snap. Job Tolley had watched the lovers from his seat under the beech-tree, and when he saw Mr. Temple fairly on the high road he turned to Mrs. Jarvis with an air of jocular familiarity.

'I've known Miss Bessie be longer over saying good-bye at the garden-gate than what she's been to-day.'

'Mr. Tolley,' replied Mrs. Jarvis, drawing herself very upright, and folding her arms in her lap, 'you'll oblige Mr. Jarvis and me by not talking quite so free. Times is changed. My daughter is going to be married by a gentleman, and if you come to our 'ouse now you must behave according.'

'Highty tighty! what's come over you, Mrs. Jarvis? You used to be pleased enough for me to walk with Bessie, and if I'd gone so far as to ask her to become Mrs. T., I'd have kep' her to her word.'

'Job Tolley,' interrupted Terah Jarvis solemnly, 'you let bygones be bygones. My daughter isn't for the likes of you, not now. It's the duty of every young woman to arise herself when she has the chance, and when a gentleman asked her she took her mind off of you.'

'Not but what Bessie might have done worse than have had you if Mr. Temple hadn't been so pressing,' added Mrs. Jarvis, condescendingly. 'I dessay there's gals as wouldn't mind marrying you, for they're a queer, fanciful lot they are.'

Job Tolley rose with an ugly scowl. 'Well, you mind that your gentleman does marry her, that's all;' and he walked to the gate where Bessie still lingered, pretending to

find fresh objects of interest in the landscape, to which a life-long familiarity had made her utterly indifferent.

'Times is changed,' said Job Tolley, with a loud sigh, 'times is very much changed since I was here last.'

'Yes, Mr. Tolley, and you oughtn't to come here no more. Times are changed, and I'm changed too;' and Bessie looked most provokingly handsome as she spoke, as though to insinuate that, changed as she might be, she was unchanged in her beauty and attractiveness.

'That's true enough,' said Tolley, winking his pale eyes rapidly as he spoke, 'I've known you be half an hour saying good-bye at this gate.'

'Job Tolley,' said Bessie, reddening from chin to brow, 'I've done with silly, giddling ways; I'm going to be Mr. Temple's wife.'

'You're going to be a fine lady I suppose you think,' he said insolently.

'I'm going to be a gentleman's wife anyhow, Mr. Tolley.'

'You'd better make sure first as he is a gentleman, for I've made inquiries that leads me to think different. He don't eat no meat, nor drink no liquors; he lived in a dog-hole of a cottage till he went to the Crown Inn; he come third class to Shelton, and carried his own porkmantle from the station; and if that's being a gentleman you might ha' done better not to ha' looked so high,' he said sarcastically.

'Mr. Temple has his ways, I know, but for all that he's a gentleman,' said Bessie firmly.

'How do you make that out?'

'Why I go by this—Mr. Temple don't act nor speak like our folks, and he's as different from you as chalk is from cheese.'

'Miss Jarvis,' said Job Tolley, opening the gate abruptly, 'if that remark is meant for a scornful illusion to my profession, let me tell you it don't sit well on a market gardener's daughter; and if some looks high for their

husbands, others can look high for their wives.'

'Come, Job Tolley, it's silly going on like that. Let's part friends,' and Bessie smiled on him in a way that fairly turned his red head.

'This is how folks part that parts friends!' and he kissed her full on her handsome mouth, while she dealt him a stinging box on the ear.

It was all horribly vulgar, but if this story has any claim to veracity the incident must be recorded. For Bessie Jarvis was vulgar, though nature had given her a beautiful and refined face, which, like a lying signboard, raised expectations never to be fulfilled, by alluring promises of entertainment within that the poverty of the house was unable to provide.

CHAPTER XVII.

MASTER AND PUPIL.

'But had you—oh, with that same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice that my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare,
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so.' R. BROWNING.

LAURENCE TEMPLE was more annoyed with Job Tolley than he cared to admit, and Borradale's warning mention of him recurred to his mind with unpleasant distinctness. He debated with himself whether he should not plainly tell Bessie to forbid him coming to the house; but Tolley was her parents' guest, and not hers, and, after all, to say anything further about him might be taking more notice of such a fellow than he deserved. It would be best to ignore that particular incarnation of vul-

garity, and to proceed quietly with the cultivation of Bessie's mind, so that the coarse and ill-bred manners of a man such as Job Tolley should inevitably become as abhorrent to her as they were to Temple himself.

Bessie, too, had been displeased by Tolley's uninvited appearance on Sunday afternoon, though her displeasure was not with him personally, but with his inopportune presence. What business had he to come spoiling their afternoon with Mr. Temple, when he might have dropped in to supper any evening, and have found them by themselves, as he used to do?

But she had told Job Tolley a piece of her mind, and she did not much care if he never came near them again. He had had his chances, and had not cared to make use of them. If Job Tolley wanted Amelia Harbottle and the shop, he was welcome to them; she had done so much better for herself that she could afford to be generous.

But it was not all satisfaction and pride that Bessie experienced in her engagement with Mr. Temple. Another feeling found place in her heart, unrecognised by her, because she was not given to self-analysis, but it existed, nevertheless, and it was a dangerous one in a young and lovely girl.

Dulness—neither more nor less—was the feeling that weighed on her mind as she saw Mr. Temple walking up the garden path, with eyes cast down in thought, and carrying a book under his arm—a book, perhaps, of an improving nature, which he intended to read aloud to her. A film of depression spread itself over Bessie's spirits as she opened the door to her lover, and he took her limp hand in his for a moment before entering the house.

Bessie's ideas of courtship were founded on that of her sister Harriett, which, though it ended disastrously, ran a merry course while it lasted. She still remembered a blissful evening when her sister's sweetheart had

taken them both to a circus at Shelton, and Job Tolley, who was almost a stranger then, had joined them there, and they had all four walked home singing in the rain afterwards.

But Mr. Temple took her nowhere. He had never even asked her to walk with him on a Sunday afternoon. This might be how gentlefolks courted, but it was not entertaining, and, to console herself, Bessie was obliged to fall back on its extreme respectability.

One hot afternoon, when Laurence paid his daily visit to the cottage, he took a few restless turns to and fro in the little parlour, and, having closely inspected the chalk drawing of the prize pig, hung a few inches from the ceiling, he said, 'Won't you bring your work with you, Bessie, and we will sit in the arbour; it will be pleasanter than staying indoors on such a warm afternoon?'

Bessie gathered up her sewing with alacrity; and they went out together through the kitchen into the garden, Temple producing a

volume from his pocket and turning over its leaves as they walked.

'I want to acquaint you with the writings of William Wordsworth, my Bessie, one of our greatest poets. He is the interpreter of nature for us,' he said, looking into Bessie's handsome face, which was beginning to wear a helpless and bewildered expression. 'Not of human nature, with its passions of love, hate, and fear, about which you cannot know much, my sweet one, but of inanimate nature. Now, you ought to be at home, even more than I, in the world of natural beauty that Wordsworth so nobly presents to us, interpreting the speech of rock and cloud and river, and giving a voice to the silent spirit that pervades all nature;' and Temple smiled fondly on the beautiful girl by his side, and, noticing her perplexed expression, he asked kindly, 'Do you follow me, Bessie?'

'No, Mr. Temple, I was walking by you—the path's wide enough for two—but I'll follow

if you like;' and she stood aside at the entrance to the arbour that he might enter first.

Temple felt a momentary contraction of heart at Bessie's hopelessly prosaic and matter-of-fact reply, which he could not wholly attribute to her want of culture, as it was precisely the kind of thing that Lady Poges would have said under the same circumstances. But, rather than suppose that the woman he had chosen for his wife resembled Lady Poges in having a strictly literal and unimaginative mind, Temple preferred to think that the fault was his own, and that he had failed to speak in an intelligible manner.

'I will make my meaning plain,' he said, smiling at Bessie, as she dusted the bench with her apron before they sat down, and placed on her taper finger the silver thimble that Temple had given her and requested her to wear instead of the species of brass bucket she had hitherto used. For, unlike the in-

habitants of the island of Cuba, of whom Columbus relates that they loved to rub brass in their warm hands, and rejoiced in the transference of the brazen smell to their skin, Laurence had a peculiar repugnance to the idea of human flesh in contact with the odorous metal. Hence Bessie's silver thimble, which was not intended to encourage her in sumptuous tastes, but to avoid a pet aversion of her lover's ; and so long as he was present she wore it, but no sooner was he gone than, with the dogged tenacity of habit, it was set aside, and she resumed her familiar brass bucket.

'I will make my meaning as clear and simple as possible ; ' and Laurence proceeded to explain to her the Wordsworthian theory of poetry, occasionally quoting such extracts from the poet as served to illustrate its meaning, while Bessie sat and patiently sewed, occasionally raising a deprecating pair of blue eyes.

The absolute silence in which Bessie received his kindly-meant instruction would in any other woman have depressed him exceedingly, but in her he regarded it as a feminine manner of accepting the mental food which his masculine intellect had selected for her nurture, and minced up fine and small to expedite digestion.

So Temple continued his little lecture, illustrated with quotations from the poet, and wherever he thought that the meaning might be obscure to a beginner he carefully explained it, till, carried away by the force of his own arguments and the lucidity of his exposition, he forgot that it was Bessie he was speaking to, and was for the moment as happy as though he had had an intelligent listener, and his heart expanded towards his pupil, as it must needs do when youth essays to teach beauty.

At length, when he had conducted her through the higher walks of Wordsworth's

poetry, Temple so far unbent as to read to her 'We are Seven,' and her face brightened into a smile of pleased recognition.

'I declare if that isn't the rhyme our little Jack learnt at school! That's never by the great gentleman you've been talking about so long.'

'Indeed, but it is, my Bessie, and if I had not read you one of his grandly simple poems you could have had no idea of the enormous range of his genius. To the true poetic mind nothing is common or unclean, and the poorest, most trivial sights and events of daily life have a pathos and tragedy of their own which it is the poet's function to reveal to us. But, my pretty one, I would not weary you for worlds,' he said, as Bessie strove with an ill-disguised yawn. 'I think I have read you enough Wordsworth for to-day.'

And in token of gratitude Bessie gave her lover a smile that might have sufficed to bring a man down by a swift descent from

the regions of abstract thought to the more immediate world of sense. Temple took her pretty hand in his and kissed it tenderly, and yet he sighed as he did so. He was exacting and unreasonable, and he required more than he was justified in expecting in this world.

Laurence Temple demanded beauty, goodness, and intellect in the woman he loved. Beauty she undoubtedly possessed, and goodness he attributed to her, but intellect he began to perceive she had not, and he was troubled by misgivings lest the two exquisite qualities alone would not content him without the third, which controls and harmonises all. These were unloverlike thoughts to entertain while he kissed his mistress's hand, but even in a moment of emotional impulse Temple's intellect was not in complete abeyance. He loved the girl with all the strength of a pure and honest, if somewhat rigid, nature, and he strove to be just towards her. She was so

young. Her whole conscious existence could not extend to more than fourteen or fifteen years, she had never been among cultivated men and women, and she was entirely without education.

Laurence felt it was unreasonable to expect too much from Bessie at this early stage. Her intellect lay dormant, as his own must have done if it had not been roused and cultivated, but when it began to stir it might be like a giant awaking from sleep.

Presently Laurence took up the volume he had laid aside, opened it, and spread it before him on the table. Bessie fixed her eyes upon her lover with awe not unmixed with dismay, and she heaved an abrupt little sigh. Laurence observed it, and, laying his hand lightly on her shoulder, said, 'For my sake, Bessie, you will try to like and understand Wordsworth, will you not, dear?' and, thus appealed to, Bessie said 'Yes' with a very pretty smile, assumed an air of receptive

intelligence, and looked at Laurence with her head on one side, like a bird.

'I won't read any more to you to-day, dearest; suppose we have a little talk together instead?'

'I am willing, Mr. Temple; what shall it be about?'

'I was thinking,' said her lover, daintily putting a stray curl of her golden hair behind her small pink ear, 'have you any other name besides Bessie that I could call you by; Bessie belongs to everyone, but I should like to call you by a name that nobody else used.'

'I've no name but the one I was christened, Elizabeth; would you like to call me that?'

'No, I don't think I care for it, it is not a favourite name of mine,' he said, smiling. 'But it is a good name, and many distinguished women have borne it. You remember our own Queen Elizabeth?'

'Oh, yes,' exclaimed poor Bessie with

joyful alacrity, as one who at length was sure of her ground; 'I know who she was; she was Queen Anne's sister.'

'No, no, dear, not Queen Anne's sister. You know that, only you are a little confused. There are a number of well-known Elizabeths. There was Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; let me see, yes, and there was the famous S. Elizabeth, of Hungary. Good heavens! what a tragedy her story is. I will tell you all about her some day—of her holy, beautiful life, and suffering that only ended with her death.'

'Poor thing! didn't they give her enough to eat?' said Bessie, with visible sympathy.

'Give her enough to eat!' replied Temple, in tones of mild astonishment. 'Dear Bessie, what do you mean?'

'Why, you said something about her being hungry and suffering, and I thought, perhaps——' But Bessie could get no further, her face flushed, and her eyes filled with tears.

'My poor love, my pretty one, you are in a very mist and cloud and fog of ignorance and misconception,' said Temple, extending a kindly hand towards her, which she did not heed. 'But don't cry, I can't bear to see you cry; and there is nothing to be ashamed of in not knowing what you have never had the opportunity of learning. Cheer up, dearest, and be glad I am here to teach you whatever you want to know. It is a delight to me to teach you, and you will improve rapidly, I am sure.'

'There's no one but you wants to improve me, everybody else likes me well enough as I am;' and Bessie wiped away a gathering tear and assumed an obstinate and stiff-necked expression.

'There, brute that I am, I have wounded you when I meant nothing but kindness!' exclaimed Laurence, ready to tear his hair; 'say that you forgive me, love, and I will never be so clumsy again. It is simply be-

cause I love you so much more than everybody else does that I want to see the noble fulfilment of which your nature is capable,' and he kissed her hands repeatedly.

'For all you're so anxious to improve me, I am as the Lord made me, I suppose,' replied Bessie, unmollified by her lover's contrition.

'We both of us need improving,' said Laurence gently, 'and if you will be patient with me, and teachable, dear, there is no saying to what heights of practical wisdom you may not attain. I will impart to you my knowledge of literature and fact, and we will study life together, and there will be such sympathy of mind and interchange of ideas between us that eventually it will not be known on which of us the blessing of culture was first bestowed. Take comfort, my Bessie; indeed you are my teacher as much as I am yours. You are teaching me the great truth which the world has forgotten, that we are all, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, of one blood.'

'Who said we wasn't?'

The brief, blunt question jarred Temple even more than the grammar in which it was expressed. Still he must be merciful. He would wait for a more propitious time to correct her, for he had hurt her feelings already, and that is not the way to encourage a backward pupil.

'No one, my dear girl, says in so many words that we are not of one blood, possibly men have not thought enough about it to form a definite opinion. But you have only to look at the gulf separating the rich from the poor, and the cultivated from the uncultivated, to see that you will confer a great favour upon me in becoming my wife. You will enable me to practise what I preach, that the kindly ties of human relationship are the only links that can bind all ranks and classes together. In marrying you, my pretty Bessie, I prove my respect for woman as woman, and show what I believe to be the

only way of breaking down the social barriers that separate one class from another.'

Bessie could not follow a line of thought that was so far beyond her. She had not a spark of imagination, but she could lay hold of an idea independent of all its bearings with irritating tenacity. She looked Laurence full in the face, while she bit off her thread with her white teeth, and said, 'If everybody was as happy in their own rank of life as I am they wouldn't be for marrying out of it.'

It was the first time that her lover had heard her express a definite opinion in opposition to his own, and it gave him a shock. In the ideal marriage he was about to make Temple imagined there would exist between himself and his wife the relation of man the teacher, woman the taught, man the speaker, woman the listener, or, if she must break silence, woman the echo; but already his wife elect was giving utterance to a thought which, if

shared by him, would drive itself like a wedge between them, and force them asunder.

'You are quite right to be happy in your own rank of life,' he said, 'but it is the duty of all classes to mix freely together, to fuse one with another, and this is best done, my Bessie, by such a marriage as you and I shall make.'

'Are a many gentlemen of your mind?' asked Bessie, softly.

'No, not yet. But our marriage should lead to many more like it. There is a grand work before us, my dearest. We shall set an example of noble and refined simplicity of living, as far removed from luxury as from anything mean or sordid, and of that highest love of man and wife that spreads far beyond mere personal love, and includes the two classes from which you and I spring, and the whole nation, of which they form but a small part;' and, elevated by the vision of society regenerated and knit together in bonds of

kinship by intermarriages between all ranks and grades, Temple drew nearer to Bessie and printed his first kiss on her fair brow.

But he could not dismiss from his mind the remembrance of poor Bessie's unmistakable signs of weariness under his readings to her from the poets. How was it to be avoided, how could he lighten the task for her? She was evidently not yet ready for any flight of imagination, and it occurred to him that some interesting work of a high order of fiction might be more within her comprehension, and better help her mental development. In a few days, therefore, Laurence presented Bessie with a beautiful copy of 'The Heart of Midlothian,' with her name written on the fly-leaf, and a pretty little ivory paper-knife inserted among the uncut pages, as a bait to lure her on to the end of the volume.

Bessie received the kindly meant gift in a way to drive a lover of books distracted.

She held the book upside down, admiring the deep soft colour of its leather binding, and giving it a light touch up with her apron, as though it were made of metal and capable of taking a polish. Laurence could have rushed from her presence then and there, but, instead, he blamed himself for being irritable and exacting, and said pleasantly :

' I hope the contents of this book will prove as attractive to you as its binding, and occupy your mind the few days I am away in Hampshire, where I must go to look at the nest I am preparing for you. "The Heart of Midlothian" is an enthrallingly interesting story, full of the most exciting scenes and events, and I envy you your first reading of it. I shall want to hear what you think of it while the impression it makes is still fresh in your mind, and if it doesn't make you both laugh and cry heartily before you have finished, I shall be surprised. I think you'll find it one of those books that become a necessity to you,

and that you will be obliged to read at intervals as long as you live.'

A week later and Laurence Temple had returned to Shelton, and was sitting in the little parlour of the Jarvises' cottage in the rocking-chair by the window, crushing in his hand a leaf of the lemon-scented verbena that stood on the sill, and idly rocking himself to and fro as he inhaled the fresh, strong perfume.

'And how did you get on without me, my Bessie?' he asked suddenly, as though recalling himself by an effort to his present company.

As a matter of fact Bessie had got on admirably without Mr. Temple, but that was an admission that could not very well be made, so she gave a little unmeaning laugh, and laid her hand on the back of his chair, and looked so handsome, that it was a sufficient reply to his question.

'And now, tell me, how did you enjoy your "Heart of Midlothian"? Did you

dream all night of Jeannie Deans's journey to London to save her sister's life, as I did when I first read it?' and he raised her fingers to his lips.

Bessie withdrew her hand, and, without saying anything, crossed the room, opened the top drawer of the shining oak dresser, and took from it something carefully wrapped in a spotless white cloth. This, unfolded, revealed the unsullied binding of the beautiful copy of 'The Heart of Midlothian,' from which she lightly blew invisible dust, and handed the book to Temple.

'Why, my dear Bessie,' he exclaimed with surprise, as he opened the volume, 'you have not even cut the leaves!'

'No; mother said I'd better not touch it for fear I should mess it.'

Something like a groan escaped Temple's lips. Then, after a brief pause, in which Bessie folded and replaced the white cloth in the drawer, and Laurence fought a sharp

mental battle with himself, he said gently, as he put 'The Heart of Midlothian' in his pocket, feeling as though he were burying something alive, 'I should like to bring you a present that you would like better than a book. What shall it be?

A smile overspread Bessie's handsome face as she said eagerly, 'O, Mr. Temple, may I speak out quite free what I should like?'

'Of course you may, I really wish to know what would please you.'

'Oh, then, I'd rather have six yards of magenta ribbon, three inches wide, than all the books that ever was printed.'

'I am sure you would,' replied Laurence, almost inaudibly, for the voice of truth carried conviction with it, and he believed her.

That very evening he brought her the object of her desire, the coveted ribbon, in all the crude horrors of its bastard colour, and Bessie was charmed. He had never be-

fore seen her so animated, or so beautiful, though her beauty was of a type that should have made it impossible for her to rejoice in magenta ribbon.

But Bessie owed her refinement of expression merely to purity of outline, and not to the influence of the mind within, to which her beauty served as a mask instead of an index. Like a sumptuous garment hiding deformity beneath its folds, her fair face concealed a poor heart and a narrow intellect.

From the fulness of his own nature Temple endowed Bessie with all the fine qualities he believed her beauty indicated. In the clear outline of her delicately formed mouth he read angelic purity and womanly sweetness. But when he looked into the blue depths of her eyes, he beheld reflected as in a mirror the thoughts and aspirations of his own soul. Her fair face only gave him what was his already, but he knew it not. Temple drew spiritual strength from

the beauty of her grave and steadfast gaze when she was absorbed in some matter of purely mundane contemplation, such as whether duck and green peas, or beans and bacon, had the stronger claim on her affections. The meanest, most trivial regret that flitted across her mind imparted to her fine features an expression of noble melancholy; or at some homely joke of her father's, or antic of little Jack's, her beautiful gravity melted into the most alluring sweetness of smiles and dimples. Bessie Jarvis's lovely face always expressed more than she felt, or than she was capable of feeling.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A REKINDLED FLAME.

'He who would keep himself to himself should imitate the dumb animals, and drink water.'—EDWARD, LORD LYTTON.

LAURENCE could not hide from himself the fact that Bessie's education did not progress under his tuition as rapidly as he had expected. It is true that she spoke more grammatically, and that her letters to him in his frequent absences from Shelton were more correctly spelt and more carefully written than heretofore. But where was the soul craving for knowledge and pressing towards the light which he had hoped to awaken and to guide? He could rouse neither interest nor enthusiasm in Bessie's mind, whether in the great history of her own country or in its noble literature of

prose or of poetry. He could neither awaken in her nor impart to her any sense of intellectual proportion, and after months of careful instruction, which would have done much for a woman of ordinary ability, Bessie could not have detected any difference in mental power or style between two such writers as, shall we say, Shakespeare and Eliza Cook?

Slowly and sadly the conviction forced itself upon Laurence that his Bessie was not a woman of intellect, and he sought comfort in the irrational conclusion that she must therefore be pre-eminently a woman of heart.

Whence comes this whimsical notion that, because Nature is niggardly in one of her gifts, she must, by way of compensation, be lavish of another? Let us not expect an answer from Laurence Temple, for he is still in love with Bessie Jarvis, and it is love's peculiar function to paint the beloved object in glowing colours, to supply all deficiencies,

and out of its own wealth to supplement another's poverty.

Bessie and her mother had many an hour of sweet converse together, picturing to themselves the home to which Mr. Temple would take her when she was his wife. He himself was exceedingly reticent on the subject. He told her nothing more than that they should live in Hampshire, on an estate left to him by his father. Thither he frequently went during their engagement; and, though he admitted that he went to superintend certain preparations for his bride's reception, he entered into no details, but assured her with mysterious smiles that a very pretty surprise was in store for her.

He had told her of the beauty of the gardens and woods at his sister's home at Coombe Delaway, and a friend of her father's, who had formerly lived in Mr. Stapleton's service, had given the Jarvises glowing accounts of the size and grandeur of the

house. Bessie never wearied of asking the ex-butler questions about the minutest details of the magnificence of the manor house, never doubting but that when she was Mrs. Temple she would be mistress of an establishment that might vie with that of Coombe Delaway.

The simple style in which Laurence had lived as long as she had known him she regarded as a bachelor's eccentricity, perhaps even as economy preparatory to his marriage, that he might have all the more money for his young wife to spend as became her position.

Bessie had received a letter from Laurence from Pine Hill, in Hampshire, telling her exultingly how beautiful her new home was beginning to look, how delighted he was with it himself, and how he anticipated her delight and approval of all that he had done for her comfort. Her curiosity was on tiptoe, but her lover's reserve on the subject prevented

her from asking him point-blank to what sort of a home he was taking her, while her imagination was left to run riot in the entire absence of information.

Bessie was cleaning the kitchen window one morning while her mother was making the bread, and her absorbing thought soon shaped itself into words.

'I wonder if Mr. Temple's place at Pine Hill is furnished as grandly as Briggs says the manor-house at Coombe Delaway is, mother,' said Bessie, as she rubbed the leather in a contemplative manner on the spotless window-pane.

'How should I know, child? It's most likely a deal finer, he's so quiet over it. He means to give you a pretty surprise, I'll be bound.'

'Well, I hope there'll be magenta curtains in the parlour, and the chandelier done up in a yellow gauze bag, like they have in Harbottle's back sitting-room.'

'Oh, your sitting-room 'll be a deal finer than Harbottle's! I wonder at your taking pattern by a cheese and butterman's parlour,' said Mrs. Jarvis, kneading the bread vigorously.

'They may be cheese and buttermen, but they've a deal of taste. 'Melia Harbottle told me that her mother kept the parlour chairs done up in brown holland that close that she never saw the stuff they was covered with, not till the day her mother was buried. She said she was wondering all the time of the funeral whether the chairs was done in blue rep or in green, but she didn't like to look till her mother was underground.'

'Ah! 'Melia was always a good girl to her mother,' said Mrs. Jarvis sighing, and dredging flour over the loaves that were ready for the oven.

'So when they were come back from the funeral, and the mourners was eating cold beef and pickles in the kitchen, 'Melia ran off

by herself to the parlour and whips the holland cover off one of the chairs; and if it wasn't done with a kind of puce stuff, a colour 'Melia never could abide! She says you might have knocked her down with a straw, and she don't think she shall ever forget her mother's buryin'.'

'Not till her own wedding, I dessay,' said Mrs. Jarvis; 'marrying puts death out o' young folks's heads wonderful. Her and Job Tolley 'll be making a match of it, I'll be bound.'

Bessie flushed angrily, breathed a hasty breath on the window pane, and rubbed it out quickly with the leather.

'Job Tolley 'll never marry a girl like 'Melia Harbottle! So, if she's set her mind on him, she'd better take it right off again.'

'Hoighty! toighty! There's no saying a word to you about Job Tolley, but you're up in the boughs directly! Anyway, he didn't want you, seemingly, when you was to be had for the asking.'

'Pon my word, mother, if folks sometimes say I've a sharp tongue I know where I get it from,' and Bessie contracted her handsome brows, and a dangerous fire gleamed in her eyes.

'Your temper's as like your father's as one pea is to another,' said her mother, 'and, judging by myself, Mr. Temple 'll need a deal of patience,' and Mrs. Jarvis nodded her head several times very slowly, with a movement partly prophetic, partly deprecating.

Bessie did not condescend to notice either her mother's remark or the gesture that accompanied it, but she said abruptly, 'Ask Job Tolley to supper one night before Mr. Temple comes back.'

'Now, what's that for, I should like to know?'

'It's because I tell you to. You write a note and send it by father on market day, and ask him to supper on Wednesday night.'

'I don't think as Mr. Temple 'ud like it.'

'I don't suppose he would,' said Bessie with a hard smile, 'but we're not going to vex him with telling him anything about it. I want to spend another evening the same as we spent a many before ever we saw Mr. Temple,' and she sighed lightly as she gave the last finishing touch to the brilliant window-pane.

Mrs. Jarvis was accustomed to obey her daughter's somewhat imperious commands, and in the afternoon, when the baking was over, she sat down to the arduous task of writing a note of invitation to Job Tolley. When she had spoiled several sheets of paper, and hopelessly involved herself in the intricacies of composition, she threw down her pen and said:

'Whatever's this nonsense of writing, when folks has got tongues i' their heads! Why can't your father ask him straight out to come and have a bit o' supper with us, same as he's often done before?'

'Things are different now, mother,' said Bessie loftily, 'and he'll think a deal of getting a letter to invite 'im.'

'Then you can write it yourself. I'm sure Mr. Temple's give you lessons enough in writing.'

'Mother, I tell you I'm not going to write to Job Tolley. Don't hurry, take your time over it; but you've got to do it, and father's got to take the note and to bring the answer back.'

By dint of the expenditure of much time and labour the invitation at length was written, and Mrs. Jarvis sealed and directed the large blue envelope. The note staggered through the first few lines in the third person, then, suddenly dropping into an easy and familiar style, it continued, 'I hope as you'll make it convenient to come and enjoy yourself;' but it ended with dignity, 'From your well-wisher, Mrs. Jarvis, of Shelton Nursery Gardens.'

Terah consented to take the invitation, though he thought a note superfluous, as tending to excite undue expectation in the guest, arguing with his wife that if she wrote to ask Job Tolley to supper he would be justified in expecting something more out of the common than roast pork.

'Then, father, you'll have to mix a bowl of punch like McDiggen taught you to, and then Job Tolley won't be disappointed, nor you neither,' said Bessie, with a smile refined and sweet, as though she spoke of the lilies that grow in Paradise.

So far Laurence Temple had only beheld that beautiful smile, without hearing the inane words or reading the vulgar thoughts which brought it to her lips.

The following night Terah Jarvis returned from Shelton in the condition known in that part of the world as 'market peart,' a state removed by many degrees from actual drunkenness, but one in which he was unduly boastful,

and felt that every word he uttered was fraught with import, and he was ready to pick a quarrel or to swear eternal friendship at a moment's notice. We know that from motives of thrift Terah never spent money on drink himself, but who was he that he should refuse to accept another man's hospitality? And so after Harbottle's shop was closed he gladly consented to go with Tolley to the 'Severn Trow,' and beguiled himself with spirits and water at his expense while he wrote a reply to Mrs. Jarvis's invitation.

Job Tolley was much readier with his pen than Mrs. Jarvis was, and Terah watched with admiration how quickly his large red hand moved over the paper.

'I don't know why my missus should a' took it in her head to write a letter to ask you to supper, I'm sure, when I never see a pen in her hand, unless it's to tot up the chicks, or just to put down when the cow's due. I suppose as our Bessie put her up to it,' continued

Terah, slowly stirring his hot spirits and water, 'for, between you and me, the girl gives herself some fine airs since Mr. Temple's been her intended.'

'I've no patience with folks marrying out of their proper spere, and I consider as Mr. Temple has took a liberty in courting a young person as anyone could have told him I walked with,' said Job Tolley, blotting his note, and glancing over it before he put it in the envelope. It pleased him exceedingly, for he was proud of his fluent style, and he admired his own writing.

The note ran as follows: 'Dear Mrs. Jarvis,—Please accept many thanks for your kind invitation, which will give me the greatest possible pleasure to be present. Yours obediently, Job Tolley.' While Tolley sealed and directed his note, Terah Jarvis had furtively mixed himself a second glass of spirits and water, considerably stronger than the first, and as he drank it rapidly its effects

were soon visible in a defiant manner and increased loquacity.

'What's that as you was saying just now about folks marrying out of their spere, I should like to know?' he asked with a truculent nod of the head.

'I was saying as Mr. Temple took a liberty in courting your daughter when I was walking with her, and what I say behind his back I'm willing to say before his face,' said Job Tolley, flushing to the colour of his own hair.

'Then you'd say as false a word as ever you spoke,' said Terah angrily, 'and if you'd spoke up like a man, and asked my girl to a' married you, she'd rather ha' had you than any o' the gentlefolks, tho' she's proud enough o' Mr. Temple, now she's got him; but he ain't her sort.'

'Come now, Mr. Jarvis, there's reason in all things. How could I ask Bessie to marry me when I didn't know for certain as Har-

bottle was going to take me into partnership? Now, if Bessie had ha' waited a bit ——'

'You go too far, Job Tolley; you go too far when you make so bold as speak of my daughter waiting for any man,' said Terah Jarvis with great solemnity. 'But if you'd spoke up and asked our Bessie, partnership or no partnership, she'd ha' had you. Mr. Temple, he don't know how to court a young woman. He comes and he sets our Bessie to her lessons like a schoolmaster, and he keeps on jawing till she can't get in a word edgeways; and he makes her a bow, instead of giving her a kiss as anyone else's sweetheart would. I'm sorry for the girl, I am. I must be off, Tolley, now; they'll scold me if I keep 'em up late at home.'

'Here's the letter, then; put it safe in your pocket, and mind you don't lose it,' and Job Tolley gave Terah his arm, took him to the door, and helped him to get into his market cart, which he did with more difficulty than it

would be just to attribute to his rheumatism only.

When he was safely seated in the cart he was extremely anxious to repeat every word that he had said in the last half-hour, but Tolley did not care to prolong the interview, and reminded him that if he did not wish to be scolded he must make haste home.

'Ah! you're my best friend, Job Tolley,' he muttered as he gave the reins a feeble shake. 'What is man without a friend, without a friend, should like to know,' and he fell into a doze as the old mare set off at a steady trot along the familiar road.

'I suppose the old fool's safe, the horse knows the way home,' said Job to himself, and he watched the cart as far as the turn in the road before he went back into the house. The old man's half-tipsy talk had stirred up many angry and vexatious feelings in Tolley's mind. He had only been restrained from asking Bessie Jarvis to marry him from fear lest

it should endanger his prospect of a partnership with his employer, and he had not proposed to Amelia Harbottle because, though it would have settled the question of the partnership satisfactorily, it would have lost him Bessie Jarvis. He was too deeply impressed with a sense of his own value lightly to bestow himself upon any young woman, and he had not been sufficiently in love with Bessie to hazard anything for her sake. He had imagined that she would always be there in case he finally decided to ask her to be his wife instead of Amelia Harbottle. But a stranger had stepped in, and was about to carry off the prize, which for the first time appeared supremely desirable to Job Tolley now that it was possessed by another.

'A rich fellow like Mr. Temple can afford to marry who he likes; he hasn't to give up nothing to ask Bessie to marry him. Of course I should have asked her myself, before he come meddling here, if I'd been sure about

the partnership, and that there was no risk to run. Hang the girl! I wish she hadn't got a face as a man can't forget. 'If she'd had 'Melia Harbottle's face, both Mr. Temple and me should ha' let her alone.'

Job Tolley spent the two days between then and the supper at the Jarvises in turning these thoughts over in his mind in every conceivable form, and the more he pondered the angrier he grew that another man should have taken what he regarded as his property, when he should have opportunity and inclination to claim his own.

Bessie had never made herself so provokingly handsome and captivating as she did on the night of the supper. While her mother, hot and red-faced, was preparing the meal, Bessie was in her little bedroom, decking herself in her Sunday's best. She put on her muslin dress with the blue sprig pattern, and soft net ruffles round her white throat and wrists, and she bound her hair with a blue

ribbon that sank deep in the thick mass of her gleaming locks. She was about to have her revenge on her laggard lover. Job Tolley should see to what attractions he had been indifferent, and how much better she was going to do for herself than if she had married him; and she smiled a handsome, malicious smile at her bright reflection in the glass.

If Laurence Temple could have seen her at that moment, he would have known that, though his love was beautiful, she was not good. From Bessie's point of view the supper given in honour of Job Tolley was a complete success. She stirred her late torpid lover from a passive to an active state of feeling. She purposely awakened his jealousy, and, having done so, affected to be indifferent to his state of mind. She encouraged him to talk to her in the old familiar style, and then assumed a haughty and repellent air, which by sheer force of contrast with her usual manner was, as she intended it to be, captivating.

Bessie had no desire now to become his wife. She preferred to marry Mr. Temple and to be made a lady of; but she found his society dull and oppressive, and for the short time that she remained at home she would like to amuse herself with her old lover, and make him realise what he had lost by his sluggish and lukewarm courting. Job's head was completely turned. Bessie, who had been so distant with him since her engagement, had now deliberately set herself to bewitch him, and her father and mother looked on with amazement at the little comedy enacted before them. When Job Tolley bade good-night Bessie walked with him to the garden gate as she used to do, and remained there whispering with him for some minutes, and dismissed him at length in a whirl of reckless and excited feeling, in which a scorn of prospective partnerships and of 'Melia Harbottle was uppermost in his mind.

Bessie returned to the house, and entered

the kitchen with heightened colour, and smoothing the white ruffles round her throat, which were tumbled and crushed. Her father looked at her with displeasure. He was afraid of his daughter, but yet he spoke.

'Bessie, you leave Job Tolley be. You're a'most the same as a married woman now; you leave 'im be.'

'Job Tolley's nothing to me,' said Bessie with a cold shrug of the shoulders, and she lighted her candle, and went upstairs without bidding her father or mother good-night.

CHAPTER XIX.

PINE COTTAGE.

The tidings of Laurence Temple's engagement with Bessie Jarvis speedily reached the ears of Mr. and Mrs. Stapleton's friends and acquaintance. In the first bitterness of her disappointment Mrs. Stapleton had intended not to speak of the matter to anyone, in the hope that Providence might interfere on her behalf in some unexpected way to prevent the catastrophe of a marriage between her brother and the market-gardener's daughter.

But when she found that Lady Poges had returned from her driving tour in Shropshire, the scandalised bearer of the highly-flavoured news, she gave up all hope of secrecy at once. For when Lady Poges heard a piece of news

that created astonishment, and was likely to give pain, she circulated it as industriously, and published it as widely, as though she had availed herself, for that purpose, of the services of the town-crier, the sandwich-man, and the bill-distributor, each in his several capacity. She and Mrs. Carruthers had a shuddering match together over the news, in which Lady Poges won, because she had lived longer in the world to be shocked than Mrs. Carruthers, and took a more despairing view of human nature.

When Mrs. Stapleton wept at the mention of her misguided brother's engagement Lady Poges told her plainly, 'I can offer you no consolation in your affliction, because your trouble is not sent to you by Providence, as all mine have been, so that you will have to bear it in your own unaided strength, and it will very likely crush you, my dear.'

All this, and much more on the same subject, Helen Wentworth had to listen to daily.

Lady Poges insisted on her niece accompanying her on a round of calls that she paid for the sole purpose of spreading the news, which she explained to Helen was a duty that she owed to society. In each house Helen was compelled to hear the same weary repetition of details, followed by the inevitable comments expressive of amusement, horror, or simple amazement.

Little Mrs. Scantlebury-Fox lifted her pretty eyebrows so high when Lady Poges told her of Mr. Temple's misdoings that for a moment Helen thought she had lost control over them, and would never be able to bring them down again. The Newburys heard the strange tidings with immovable faces and with immovable prejudice, and expressed a hope that Laurence Temple would not bring his wife into their neighbourhood, as it would not be possible for them to call upon such a person. Mr. Carruthers asserted his opinion that no course of conduct, no matter how

perverse or even depraved, could surprise him in a man subsisting, as Mr. Temple was known to do, chiefly on vegetables and water. Mrs. Cox alone, of all the Stapletons' acquaintance, received the news of Laurence's engagement with a kindly wish for his happiness.

Helen preserved unbroken silence when Laurence's conduct was canvassed. She passed no judgment, condemnatory or otherwise, on the culprit. She had no clue to his motives, but nothing would induce her to discuss his actions. Her resolute silence, when all around her expressed themselves without reserve, irritated her aunt extremely.

'I really think you have no feeling,' she said, 'for even at my time of life I cannot see with indifference a young man throw himself away in this sad manner.'

At times the expression of Lady Poges's indignation became grotesque, and, when she described Laurence's engagement as a 'menace

to society,' and a 'standing insult to every young lady of his acquaintance,' Helen was forced to laugh, though her laughter ended in a sigh. Only with Mrs. Stapleton could she open her heart at all, and that very little in speech, but the two women understood each other, and suffered a bitter disappointment in their brother and friend.

Laurence Temple spent a great part of his time on his estate at Pine Hill, in Hampshire, occupied in preparing his future home, and in portioning out the land in plots for the seven years of experiment he purposed to make.

Though much talk was then going on in the world about the imperative necessity for every man in the country to possess at least three acres of land, Laurence proved as a matter of fact that it was exceedingly difficult to find buyers for small plots even at a moderate price, and with payment extending over a period of several years. His intention

was to sell pieces of land of from three to six acres in extent to men who would work them themselves, and who must live by the produce of the soil or come to want. He would keep in his own hands and under his own management duplicate plots of land, and try whether he or the purchasers of the similar plots would make them most productive. He also set aside a number of plots which he would not sell, but let to suitable tenants, in order to learn from his own observation whether men paying rent worked with more or with less industry than those who by buying the land had freed themselves from the charge of rent. And he was anxious to find out whether these small proprietors and landowners could make as much money out of the soil as would equal the wages he paid to his labourers for cultivating the same number of acres under the same crops.

Here Laurence promised himself boundless scope for interesting and valuable experiments

in acquiring practical knowledge. He would have been happy in his congenial task, even if he were not going to marry Bessie Jarvis, and bring her to Pine Hill to lead with him an ideal life. Laurence had no wish to live in the large house belonging to the estate. He shrank from the thought of the unnecessary cares and encumbrances in which a man involves himself who keeps up a large establishment. As Mr. Temple, of Pine Hill House, he would be expected to observe certain social customs, and to perform a variety of artificial duties entirely repugnant to his ideas. He would have to visit and to entertain the dwellers in all the other large houses in the county, not because their society was congenial to him, but because they lived in houses of the regulation size, and kept the proper number of servants and horses—in short, because they took up as much room in their little world as other people did, of the same means and of the same

position. Viewing life as Temple viewed it, this would be a sheer waste of force, and frittering away of time and energy, that he neither could nor would afford.

'I am not marrying a lady who would require me to lead the cramped and fettered life society imposes on men of my means and position,' he argued with himself. 'My simple-minded Bessie will help me to live as I think best for us both, and she will neither expect nor desire luxuries to which she has never been accustomed.'

But what should he do with the big house in which he had decided not to live? He could not let it stand empty, for waste of any kind was abhorrent to him, and, though it would not add to his happiness to live in it, that was no reason why it should not be a paradise to someone else. Temple took counsel with no one, not even with Bessie, that it might not be in her power to talk over his affairs with her parents. At length he decided

what he would do with Pine Hill House. He gave it, together with its surrounding gardens, for a convalescent home in connection with the infirmary in the neighbouring town of Hilbury; and when his friends heard of the gift they regarded Temple as a philanthropic madman. Those who did not know him, and to whom his philanthropy and his sanity were equally indifferent, settled it that he would never have given the house away if it had been in a fit state for his own habitation; and they accounted for such unwonted generosity by asserting that Mr. Temple purposed building for himself on a still larger scale, and with all modern improvements. This theory was received and considered satisfactory by those who attribute unworthy motives to account for actions differing in any degree from the ordinary standard of conduct.

For his own home Laurence chose the head gamekeeper's cottage. It was a pretty little red-tiled house, standing at the edge of

a birch coppice, on rising ground, down which hurried and gurgled a clear stream that found rest and silence at the foot of the hill in a pool fringed with alders and wild rose. The air was filled with the lulling sound of flowing water, but as the ear grew accustomed to its ceaseless murmur other sounds also became audible—the humming of bees, the monotonous coo of the wood pigeon, and the scampering of rabbits in the coppice at the other side of the wire fence that protected the garden from their ravages.

Pine Cottage contained the same number of rooms as the house in which Bessie Jarvis was born and had lived all her life. The front door, sheltered by a spacious rustic porch, opened into a large, cheerful house-place. To the right was a small room, which Temple made into his library, and at the back was the kitchen. Upstairs were three bedrooms and a large cupboard. What more could a young couple require? Here was a place to

cook in, a place to eat in, a room to read in and to entertain friends, a room to sleep in, another for the little maid-servant, and a spare room for Borradale or Norton whenever they came that way.

Temple was more than content with the little house, and as he assigned each room to its own purpose he felt how amply it met all his requirements. He had the cottage papered, painted, and whitewashed to a point of dainty purity and cleanliness that would have satisfied even a Dutch housewife. The furnishing and decorating of the little home he found a short and simple task, for he had not fallen a victim to the mania for domestic ornamentation, and he did not know what it was to feel his brow furrowed with care because the curtains did not 'go' with the portière, or life a burden because of the want of harmony between the hearthrug and the border of the tablecloth. The anxious thought that many of his friends bestowed upon their furniture and upholstery

amused and puzzled him, and he could only occasionally endure an evening in which the shape of the sofa and the pattern of the carpet formed the chief topic of conversation. The passion for beauty and luxury in household furniture struck Temple as an effeminate weakness, and he wondered to see men carried away by it. To him it was a side-saddle hobby, which his manhood forbade him to mount. If the curtains served the purpose for which they were hung, and kept out the draughts, he did not agonise over their sage-green or peacock-blue tints; if his table was strong enough to support the weight set upon it, it was indifferent to him whether it had as many legs as a centipede, or stood like a mushroom on its stalk. He regarded a chair mainly as something intended to be sat down upon, rather than as a thing of beauty to be a joy for ever; so that in buying these indispensable pieces of furniture he chose them from a severely practical point of view.

A particularly stout and strong chair would be useful when Norton came to visit him, for he had a knack of tilting his chair on its hind legs in a manner fatal to all but the most stalwart triumphs of the carpenter's craft. Against a possible visit from Tim Ballinger Temple provided himself with a wooden-bottomed chair, with front and hind legs equally massive and strong; and for Borradale, whom he longed to see again, he selected a chair whose wide hospitable arms, deep seat, and sloping back would invite him to sink into its depths and remain there indefinitely.

But one small piece of furniture Laurence chose with deeper emotion than the utmost enthusiast in domestic decoration could experience. It was a low rocking-chair, which he placed by the fire-side, and in imagination he saw a young mother seated in it with a babe upon her lap, and the little chair be-

came the throne of a Queen, and he stood before it with reverence.

Laurence was at his best and happiest. Away from Bessie he was not jarred and annoyed by her parents, and he could muse on the perfections with which he had endowed her without danger of being disillusioned by too near a view of the beloved object. His experimental farming occupied him in a way completely congenial to him, and he busied himself in planning and superintending the building of labourers' cottages, that his men might be properly housed and close to their work. The useful, unpretending nature of his daily occupation soothed and strengthened his spirit. On however small a scale he was among the doers instead of the talkers; he was not adding to the clamour of life, while, as silent men may, he was doing much to remove all cause of clamour. His work was constructive and not destructive, and it must neces-

sarily proceed slowly and at the same pace with other labours which result in lasting fruit.

Temple had engaged as his bailiff a man named Lemuel Roach, with whom he thought that he could work for the benefit of all dependent upon him. Laurence was at once too generous and too imaginative to be a judge of character: too generous, because he endowed everyone broadcast with good qualities; too imaginative, because he saw men and things as he wished them to be and not as they really were. He took Lemuel Roach for a man of honour and integrity, because he had raised himself from the position of a day labourer to that of a farm bailiff. Temple regarded Roach's rise in life as a tangible proof of virtue rewarded, for he had not grasped the fact that in every rank men may better their condition by unworthy and unscrupulous means, as well as by industry, thrift and perseverance. From his

earliest boyhood it had been Lemuel Roach's sole object to get on in life, quite irrespective of how he attained his end, so that in pursuit of the desired object his transactions had occasionally been of a description which the word 'shady' but inadequately expresses.

Laurence regarded Lemuel Roach as an upright, trustworthy man, while Lemuel Roach saw in Laurence Temple an open-handed, credulous gentleman with more wealth than wit, judging by the confiding way in which he allowed him to spend and to receive money. He did not understand his master giving away the large house, and choosing to live in the gamekeeper's cottage. But Roach was strictly practical, and went through life ignoring or forgetting all facts that had no bearing on his own affairs, and Mr. Temple's eccentricities were nothing to him so long as he allowed him the free use of large sums of money, and was satisfied with the account he rendered of its expenditure.

'You see, sir,' he would say as he explained away some extravagant item in the farm book, 'it's no manner o' use putting sweat only into the land. You must put both gold and sweat, capital as well as labour, for you'll get no more out of the land than what you puts in it,' and the cheque was signed, and Lemuel Roach went about his business with a satisfied grin on his face.

CHAPTER XX.

A WEDDING.

THE year of Laurence Temple's engagement sped swiftly by, and the day of his marriage drew near. Bessie and Mrs. Jarvis had completed all their simple preparations for the event, the bride's 'things' were finished to the last stitch, and already sprinkled with lavender buds and packed in the cow-hide trunk that had served her mother for the same purpose six-and-twenty years before. Temple had urgently requested the Jarvises that the wedding might be strictly private, and the company limited to Bessie's parents, with the inevitable little Jack.

Dick Norton had written offering to be his best man, but he had denied himself the

pleasure of seeing his friend by bargaining with Bessie that he would ask no one to their wedding if she, on her part, would not invite her sister Harriett and her husband. Temple further arranged that they should be married at nine o'clock in the morning, an hour at which it was not likely that there would be many sightseers on the look-out for a wedding in a small country church.

Bessie was to wear a white muslin dress, and a white chip bonnet with pink rosebuds, and she felt secretly aggrieved that her lover wished no one but her family to be present at the wedding, when she would have liked as many eyes as possible to have seen her in her young beauty and her bridal finery. She and her mother felt no scruple in disobeying Mr. Temple's expressed wish by telling their friends the hour at which the ceremony would take place, and her father also did his best to make it known, both in the market and at the public-house. Laurence remained

at Pine Hill till the day before his wedding, superintending the final touches of perfection in his modest home. When all was finished, and he was about to leave for Shelton, he went once more through each room to satisfy himself that nothing was forgotten, and nothing incomplete. He looked with especial delight on the shining oak dresser in the front kitchen, which he had chosen because of its resemblance to the one in the Jarvises' house. With affectionate forethought he had placed it so that the first object to meet his young wife's eyes on entering her new home should be something to remind her of the old home she had left.

Laurence had placed her favourite plants on the window-sill, and garnished the mantelpiece with a row of brass candlesticks, such as Bessie had been accustomed to all her life. A fire was laid in the shining grate, and a bright copper kettle stood on the hob, the very kettle from which tea would be

made for his bride and himself on the following evening.

For a wedding tour, or even a trip or journey, formed no part of Temple's plans. Nowhere could he and his young wife live more secluded than at Pine Hill, and there was no reason why he should delay bringing her to the home his love had provided for her. When he had satisfied himself that everything was in perfect order, he locked up the house, and gave the key to Lemuel Roach, whose daughter Hester, a girl of sixteen, he had engaged as servant. He left instructions with her about the tea that was to be prepared late the next evening, but he told her to leave the fire in the little sitting-room unlighted. It was a fancy of his that the young wife herself must kindle the first fire on their hearth. It would be an omen of good that home should receive warmth and light at her hands.

By eight o'clock on the morning of his

wedding-day Laurence opened the wicket-gate of Terah Jarvis's garden, and walked up the path, that had been swept with exceeding care. Terah and his little grandson were loitering about the porch, already dressed for the festivity, and looking very uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes.

'Mother's turned me and the little chap out o' doors,' said Terah, by way of explanation. 'She made us get ourselves ready, and leave the house to her and Bessie, to do their dressing. Will you sit down in the porch, Mr. Temple? They've locked the door, else I'd offer you a chair.'

Then, with a side glance at little Jack, whose fat face wore an expression of stupid gravity, he added, 'Mother's put the little chap into his gloves a'ready, to keep him out o' mischief, see yer,' and Temple saw that Jack's balls of fists were tortured into a pair of white cotton gloves that projected in narrow points an inch beyond his stumpy

finger-ends, and their elastic bands were cutting deep into his fat, purple wrists.

'Come here, Jack,' said Temple, addressing the child for the first time in many months, 'and I'll take those tight gloves off for you.'

'We mustn't do that, Mr. Temple, not whatever happens,' said Terah, shaking his head. 'Mother put 'em on, and I never touch nothing o' Mrs. Jarvis's doing. Come, come, Jack, you must bear up like a man, and grandfather 'll give you a penny to buy bulls'-eyes.'

It was a close, cloudy morning, and in the heavy, sunless atmosphere the country looked as little beautiful as was possible. There was a great chattering of starlings assembling to take their southward flight; here and there yellow leaves flecked the dark green of the foliage, and the stubble-fields, unilluminated by sunshine, looked cold and cheerless. It was one of those days in autumn that serve

as a link between the two seasons, when something of summer warmth still lingers, while the dull, cloudy sky gives presage of the coming gloom of winter.

'Pity as we couldn't a' had a bit o' sunshine to cheer us up,' said Terah, looking towards the eastern horizon; then adding, in a tone of well-affected surprise, 'Why, if there ain't folks a'ready goin' to church!' and Temple saw groups of young people crossing the fields, and heard laughter and giggling.

'Mr. Jarvis,' he said, annoyed at the sight, 'I expressly requested you not to let the hour of the wedding be known.'

'So you did, sir, and every way honourable to your feelin's. But our Bessie's father's too much thought of in these parts for folks to let 'im marry her off in a hole and corner like, unknownst to 'em,' and Terah Jarvis's face expanded with self-complacency.

Just then the casement overhead opened

abruptly, and Mrs. Jarvis's shrill voice was heard.

'My word, Jack, if you go and pick up mulberries i' them white gloves, I'll let you know,' and the window was shut with a snap.

These were the vulgarities that jarred Laurence Temple's whole nature, and not the homeliness of the Jarvises' surroundings, or their simple mode of life. He looked at his watch. It was a quarter to nine, and at last the key turned in the lock, the front door opened, and Mrs. Jarvis, a dread vision, came through the porch into the garden. Temple never knew quite certainly what Bessie's mother wore that day, only that her dress and bonnet and shawl presented a blinding contrast of violent colours. She had formed her pockethandkerchief into the semblance of an iron-holder, with which she grasped her prayer-book as though it were hot, and in her left hand she carried a nosegay and a large green parasol. Temple greeted Mrs.

Jarvis with probably the coldest and most distant bow with which he had ever frozen her loquacity, or kept her vulgarity in check.

'Good morning, Mr. Temple. Bessie 'll be down in a minute, but I can't get the girl away from the looking-glass.'

Laurence turned from her as though he did not hear her, and said to Terah Jarvis, by way of changing the subject, 'Won't you give me a flower for my buttonhole, Mr. Jarvis?'

'Aye, to be sure, and welcome, sir, if I'd thought you'd a' cared for it,' and Terah hurried away to his little greenhouse for a sprig of myrtle and a bit of heliotrope.

By the time the posy was fetched, made up, and pinned in its place, it was nine o'clock, and Mrs. Jarvis called shrilly to her daughter, 'We was due at the church at nine o'clock; whativer are you doing up there?' and Bessie came downstairs in as leisurely a manner as though she had an hour to spare.

Laurence had never seen her look so

lovely, and he gazed at his young bride in a rapture of admiration. He wished that his sister could see her at that moment. He felt certain that every musty, old-world prejudice would vanish before such a presence. Bessie's beauty was heightened more than she knew by the soft colour in her cheeks, and the animation of her whole bearing, to which her unconscious air gave the last added touch of perfection.

But, on this supreme day in her life, Bessie hoped rather to tantalise an old lover by her bright, young beauty than to delight her husband. Job Tolley had sworn that he would be at church to see the last of her as Bessie Jarvis, if it cost him his situation at Harbottle's for leaving the shop without permission at an irregular hour, and she determined that the sight should be as painful to him as possible. Not that Bessie wished that Job Tolley was her bridegroom. It was a much finer thing to marry a gentleman, and

be the mistress of a large house, and drive about in a barouche with her feet stretched out before her as though she were lame. No, she no longer wished to be a cheesemonger's wife, only Job Tolley must be punished for not having asked her to become one when it might have been a temptation to her.

As the little bridal party entered the church Laurence beheld abundant proof of what he already suspected, that his express desire that no one should be told the hour of the wedding had been entirely disregarded. Bench after bench at the front of the church was crowded with tittering, staring young girls and youths, who seethed with excitement as Bessie and her father walked up the aisle. After a brief moment of annoyance at the unwelcome sight Laurence dismissed it from his mind. The whole world was welcome to see him married if it liked, and had nothing better to amuse it.

As he and his bride stood before the altar

Laurence saw for a moment, clearly as a drowning man sees all his past life rise before him, the steps by which he had been led to seek Bessie for his wife. He wrestled with grim forebodings, and with a fear lest, after all, he might be making a gigantic mistake. All his anxiety was for himself; it did not occur to him that his young wife might not be happy—that she, too, might meet with chilling disappointment.

Then began the marriage service, as solemn as the funeral service, and much more important to those over whom it is read; and at its conclusion fresh courage came to Laurence—the courage of a man who has taken an irrevocable step, who has made his choice and must abide by it. And, as he looked at his beautiful bride, and thought how soon he should have removed her from her vulgar and uncongenial surroundings, his misgivings dwindled away, and he was filled with hope of the future. When the wedding-party had

gone into the vestry to sign the register Laurence wrote his name first, and then, handing the pen to his bride, said, 'Now, dearest, you must write your name here: Elizabeth Jarvis.'

'But my name is Elizabeth Temple; I'm not a Jarvis now,' she replied, more promptly than her father thought handsome in a child of his, who had borne his name for twenty years.

'Yes, it seems odd that you must sign the name that is no longer yours; but so it is, and it will be for the last time,' and Bessie signed, as she was bidden, in an unfaltering hand, presenting a strong contrast to the trembling signatures of other brides in that veritable Domesday Book. Then followed the signatures of Terah and Harriett Jarvis as witnesses, and this was a slow and anxious matter, owing to the rooted conviction of the bride's parents that there was danger involved in signing one's name.

'Are there any more formalities to be complied with?' asked Laurence at length.

'No,' replied the clergyman; 'we have tied the knot indissolubly,' and the little party prepared to set out on their homeward journey.

Mrs. Jarvis was once more at leisure to smack and chide little Jack for gnawing the long finger-ends of his white cotton gloves. Terah Jarvis had twice put on his hat and taken it off again, remembering that they would have to walk through the church, and Bessie, with the prettiest blushes and smiles, placed her hand on her husband's arm. The bride and bridegroom then headed the brief procession, which consisted merely of themselves, followed by Terah Jarvis, and, at a short distance behind him, by Mrs. Jarvis, encumbered by her prayer-book, parasol, and nosegay, so that she had not a hand to spare for little Jack, who trotted along by her side, taking hold of a piece of his grandmother's gown.

A rustle of admiration passed over the congregation as the handsome bride walked down the aisle, looking steadily to right and left to see who was present at her triumph. Could Job Tolley have stayed away? No, he must be somewhere in the church, though she could not see him. Perhaps he had hurried away to get back to the shop, while they were signing their names in the vestry. If he had done so, it was too bad of him, just to snatch a glimpse of her, and then to deprive her of the satisfaction of seeing the effect the sight of her as Mr. Temple's wife would produce on her old lover. Bessie was beginning to feel angry with Job Tolley, and to wonder whether after all he had dared to break his promise, when suddenly she was brought face to face with the object of her conjectures. For an instant neither Bessie nor her husband recognised Job Tolley. His face was drawn and haggard, his eyes wild and bloodshot, and his red hair, dank with moisture, clung to his

clammy brow. His smirk of self-satisfaction, his truculent conceit, had forsaken him. Every artificial prop by which he had sustained his shallow nature had given way under the shock of strong feeling, for passion destroys vulgarity as fire burns up dross and leaves only the pure metal unconsumed. At that moment, torn by love, jealousy, and hatred, Job Tolley was transfigured, and Laurence Temple might pity or hate him, but he could not despise him. His poor, mean-featured face was a medium clear as glass, through which Temple saw the weak soul struggling with passions beyond its power of mastery.

'What has happened to the man?' he asked Bessie as he felt her hand tremble on his arm. He had no inclination to call him 'fellow' now.

'He doesn't like me marrying you,' his bride whispered.

'Well, God help him, if he feels as he

looks. And now we need never speak of him again.'

But Temple could not forget that tragic face, the more impressive to him because hitherto it had only been connected in his mind with mean and vulgar associations. He could not know that his lovely young wife was guilty of the misery stamped on Tolley's face, that he beheld there her deliberate handiwork, wrought for her own pleasure.

As they walked across the fields Mrs. Jarvis said to her husband, 'Whatever's to do with Tolley? He don't look hisself at all.'

'Perhaps Harbottle's give him notice, or cheeses is down again; summat's worritin' him.'

Laurence stood for the last time in the Jarvises' little parlour, while his bride, after making a very hearty breakfast, had gone upstairs with her mother, to put on the simple brown dress in which she was to

travel. The fly stood at the garden gate, with Bessie's cow-hide trunk on the top, and her bandboxes inside—luggage suggestive, even to the serious mind of the bridegroom, of going to a new 'situation.' He was mentally bidding good-bye to each object his eyes rested on. Bessie, of course, must see her parents sometimes; but, if human determination meant anything, he resolved never again to enter the house after he had bidden a final good-bye to his father and mother-in-law.

He wondered if Bessie would feel leaving her home very much. That it would be a trouble to her parents to part with their daughter there could be no doubt; but when he tried to say something appropriate on the subject to her father he did not appear to understand what he meant, and Temple felt that he could not have expressed himself with sufficient clearness.

Meanwhile, in the room overhead, Mrs.

Jarvis was giving Bessie her parting advice as she put on her bonnet before the cracked looking-glass.

'Well, child, you may say good-bye to cottages, and patchwork quilts, and doing your own work now, I'm thinking. Be sure and write and tell me all about Pine Hill, and how many servants there is, and what the drawing-room chairs is covered with; and be sure and put cold cream on your hands and sleep in your gloves, and then they'll soon look as if they'd never done a stroke o' work. And, when folks call on you, have up the cake and wine immediate—spirits and water isn't genteel, though well enough for your father and such like; and the oftener you ring the bell the more the servants 'll think of you, and never guess as you came out of a place like this,' and Mrs. Jarvis looked round at the whitewashed walls with contempt.

'We shan't get to Pine Hill not till it's dark, so I shan't see what the outside's like;

but I shall go through all the rooms to night. Shall I do, mother?' and, as Bessie finished tying her bonnet-strings, her handsome face was radiant with self-satisfied smiles.

'Aye, my dear, you'll do,' said Mrs. Jarvis proudly; 'you're fit for dukes and pallises, leave alone Mr. Temple,' and with a ripple of gratified laughter at her mother's unwonted compliment the bride went downstairs.

She made but a short leave-taking. 'Good-bye, father, I daresay I shall come and see you sometime,' and she gave him her cheek to kiss. 'Good-bye, Jack, and mind you learn to eat your sops without spilling 'em on the table-cloth. Good-bye, mother, anything that I've forgotten be sure and send after me,' and Bessie left her parents and the home of her childhood without a tear in her eye or a tremble in her voice.

When the fly had driven away from the gate, and he had seen the last of his daughter,

Terah Jarvis walked with bowed head up the garden path, and said, as he entered the house, 'She's off, she's gone. She's been a queer one. Mother, give me my garden coat, and I'll go and dig up them parsnips.'

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRIDE IN HER NEW HOME.

Laurence Temple and his bride had a slow and tedious journey into Hampshire; but it was not too long for Bessie, who had travelled so little in her uneventful life that she found it a pleasant excitement merely to be sitting in a railway carriage, irrespective of the speed at which it was moving. She watched the sun set in autumnal pomp of cloud and lurid glow, and then the grey twilight fell, and the landscape grew mysterious and obscure, and still the train rushed on through gloom that deepened into darkness, and bride and bridegroom could only see each other's faces by the uncertain light of the oil lamp overhead.

Bessie smiled to herself to think of large

rooms, lighted from glittering chandeliers, in the great house where she was going to be the mistress. She pictured to herself a drawing-room with walls covered with mirrors, and windows festooned with magenta velvet curtains. Mantelpieces glittering with lustre candlesticks, and wax flowers under glass shades, rose out of the dark landscape, and dazzled her mental vision. Her usually dull imagination was all aglow, fired by anticipation of everything that to her meant beauty and refinement. Her heart was so full, she could not speak. She heaved happy little sighs, and once or twice leaned forward, and then sat very upright, rehearsing the manner in which she should sit in the carriage that would be waiting for them at Pine Hill station.

'We shall soon be at home now, my Bessie,' said Laurence gaily as the train slackened speed, and he put his head out of the open window. 'Yes, this is Pine Hill. How quickly the last hour has gone!' and he helped

his young wife to alight, and would not allow the porter to touch her band-boxes, but reached them down himself as gently as though they contained Venetian glass.

Then Bessie heard him give directions for her cow-hide trunk and his portmanteau to be carried to a fly that had been ordered to meet the train. Her heart died within her at the word. Where was the carriage she had so confidently expected? But she remembered that many gentlemen took as much care of their horses as though they were Christians, and delicate ones too, so she supposed Mr. Temple did not like to have them out after dark; but when she was the mistress at Pine Hill she would manage differently. She entered the fly in silence, and she said nothing as they slowly drove along the dark lanes; but Laurence did not notice it, for his heart was so full that her silence seemed eloquent to him. Then the fly stopped, and the driver, opening the door, asked if he should wait

there for the luggage to be fetched. And Laurence explained to Bessie that no vehicle could drive to the house, that there was only a foot-path up the steep hill leading to their garden ; and he congratulated her that it was not raining, since, be the weather fair or foul, they could only reach their home on foot.

'I know you can climb well,' he said cheerfully; 'give me your hand, dear, and I will lead you,' and he led his bewildered bride carefully up the steep path, while she, too shy to ask him any questions, looked eagerly through the darkness for the lighted windows of a big house.

As they rounded a curve on the hill-side a faint twinkle of light was visible, and Laurence laughed with delight as he pointed to it and said, 'Do you see that, Bessie?'

'Do you mean that lantern someone's carrying up there?'

'No, dearest, look again ; it isn't a lantern, it does not move. It is a candle that I left

word was to be set in the window to light us up the hill. No star ever shone so bright, or lighted a belated wanderer to such joy, as that little candle that leads you and me to our simple home, my Bessie,' and they entered the garden, guided by the thin ray of light, and he led his young wife by the hand through the darkness to the cottage porch.

As Laurence opened the door a stream of ruddy light from the fire and the candles shone brightly upon them, in welcome contrast to the darkness without, that was eerie with the rushing sound of water and fitful gusts of autumn wind.

'Enter, my queen,' said Temple, smiling, taking off his hat, and opening wide the door; and Bessie stepped before him into a bright, cheerful houseplace, in all essentials so like the home she had left that day that she fairly started with surprise.

Laurence followed her, closing the door behind him; and he and his wife were alone in

their home. To him it was a spot holy as a church, but kindly and familiar, and apt for all household joys, and he turned to his young wife with a smile of larger happiness than her nature could comprehend.

'I have prepared it all for you myself. That dresser, that you thought looked like an old friend to you as you entered, gave me a good deal of trouble to secure, but I was determined to get it for you. I thought, if I had something in the new home, that I bring my little wife to, exactly like some familiar object in the old home she has left for my sake, she would not feel any sense of strangeness; it would be as if a friend of her childhood was waiting to welcome her. I never was so happy in my life as in preparing this pretty surprise for you, my darling, and you've no idea how hard I found it not to tell you when I was so lucky as to meet with the dresser and the brass candlesticks like those at Shelton. But I determined not to say a word to spoil

the perfect surprise. But I promise never to keep a secret from you again. Tell me that you like it, dearest,' and Laurence took his young wife in his arms, and kissed her tenderly.

But Bessie could not even smile. She looked round the room with inexpressible disappointment, and her lip quivered. Laurence thought that she was overwrought and fatigued with her long journey, and that this last proof of his thoughtful love was too much for her. 'Does our little home please you, dear?' he said gently, and Bessie sank into a chair, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

Laurence had never seen her weep before, and it went to his heart.

'My darling, my wife, what troubles you, what can trouble you on our wedding-day?' and he laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder, that shook with her sobs. Then, in the midst of her tears, as he leaned over her, he heard her reply :

'O Mr. Temple, I thought—I thought you married me to make a lady of me!' and he withdrew his hand from her shoulder as though he were burnt, his face grew very pale, and he stood in silence by his young wife.

When he spoke it was in a voice unlike his own, and his utterance was slow and distinct. 'You think you cannot be a lady in a simple cottage like this? Do you know, I think we are beginning our married life with a very sad misunderstanding. If you have gentle, courteous manners, and are kind and considerate to others, and have a good, tender heart, you are a lady; but if you have them not, and are not kind and considerate, you are not a lady, and no man could make you one by marrying you.'

'But I thought,' sobbed poor Bessie, 'I thought you would take me to a big house like your sister lives in. I did not know that gentlefolks lived in cottages like this.'

Temple laughed a joyless laugh as he realised how impossible it was to make Bessie understand him. He glanced round the room, with its simple furniture fulfilling all sensible requirements, that a few minutes before had looked so beautiful and homelike to him, and he did not care if the cottage was burnt down that night, and himself with it.

Bessie's words revealed to him a great gulf fixed between him and his young wife, that nothing could bridge over. Her genuine distress and disappointment on entering the modest home Temple had prepared for her with so much love and forethought proved to him what he had never suspected, that his wife had married him merely because he was a gentleman—that she had expected he would take her to a large house full of servants, and to make her, by dint of fine clothing and idleness, the tawdry, useless thing that poor Bessie understood by the term 'lady.' Laurence had made a great mistake in suppos-

ing that because Bessie Jarvis had spent twenty years in a cottage, living simply, and each day fulfilling her monotonous household duties as she was forced to do, that therefore it was the ideal life that she would be content and happy always to live. She was extremely lazy, and had never worked except under compulsion, and she knew that as a poor man's wife she must work hard; but as Mr. Temple's wife she believed she need never do any kind of work again, and might gratify to the full her inborn feminine love of finery. Had not most of the people she knew either risen in life or tried hard to improve their circumstances? and were they not praised for their success or for their efforts, as though there were something meritorious in them? Had not her father raised himself from abject poverty to his present comfortable means, and her mother bettered her condition by her marriage with her father? Was not Job Tolley trying to get on in life, to have a shop

of his own, and be his own master if Harbottle would not take him into partnership? And would it not be a fine thing for her, too, to rise in life, to become Mr. Temple's wife, from being a market gardener's daughter?

Laurence Temple had made no allowance for the very natural craving of a handsome girl of humble birth to be raised into a higher rank than her own, to a sphere that must necessarily be exceedingly attractive to her. Why should he expect his wife to be rootedly attached to the manner of life to which she was born when he himself had broken loose from the customs and traditions of his own rank? In this he had set her an example that she was ready enough to follow. If Temple, having tried wealth and position, did not think much of either, Bessie was by no means inclined to take it on her husband's word that small means and a humble lot were best. Bessie Jarvis would have been happy in a cottage with a man of her own order, but if she were

to do anything so uncongenial as to marry a gentleman she expected to be recompensed for the sacrifice in some very tangible form. It would have been safer and wiser for Laurence to have tried love in a cottage with a lady, to whom it would offer all the charm of a novel experiment, and who would not think that the size of the house she dwelt in made her more or less of a lady.

Poor Bessie! the little house that her husband had intended to be the sweetest surprise for her had proved a surprise indeed, but a bitter one. She thought of Harbottle's parlour with its gilt chandelier done up in a yellow gauze bag, and she glanced contemptuously at the two brass candlesticks on the table.

'Will you not have some tea?' said Laurence at length, stifling his disappointment and disillusion, and fearful of saying something cruel if he spoke of what was in his heart.

And the young wife seated herself at the

table with swollen eyelids and a tear-stained face, and poured out tea for her husband and herself. But she could only sigh and play with her teaspoon ; she could not eat, and the cold chicken and tongue stood untouched.

When Temple had learned to know his wife and her personal habits intimately he realised how deep and real was the grief that had deprived her of her hitherto unfailing appetite. When tea was over, he told Hester Roach to light the fire in the little sitting-room. He had intended that his wife should kindle the first fire in the new home, but now he knew that she would think he was asking her to do something menial in the simple act that to him would have been full of beautiful meaning. There was a woman who would have kindled a fire, and poured a libation to the household gods, on the humblest hearth, and under the meanest roof that gave shelter to Laurence Temple and herself—but she was a lady.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. AND MRS. TEMPLE.

'Tis a grand thing for a married pair to live in perfect union, but the devil rarely permits this.'—MARTIN LUTHER.

THERE are few moments in life in which the imagination does so much work in so short a space of time as when on our travels we catch our first far-away view of some renowned city towards which we are journeying. Its defects are softened by distance, its details massed together in broad effect, rainbow tints conceal and glorify its squalid depths, and the mind conceives an ideal image, destined to dwell in memory as a thing apart from the after-impression produced by accurate knowledge of the reality. As we walk the streets of the city, that, beheld from afar, appeared so

lovely, we find in it much that is sordid and mean and destructive of romance: the glory is departed from it, and the veil of enchantment withdrawn from our eyes.

Such a disillusioning process Laurence Temple underwent day by day after his marriage with a wife whom, from the wealth of his own imagination, he had dowered with every noble and loveworthy quality. It was not Bessie's fault, but her misfortune, that Laurence had so idealised her that, even had she been greatly superior to what she was, an intimate knowledge of her character could only lead to deep disappointment. The graces and perfections with which he had invested her existed only in his own mind, and he had fallen in love with the creature of his imagination.

And Bessie also, from a very different cause, was as unhappy as her husband. She had married Mr. Temple without loving him—simply because he was a gentleman. The

time of her engagement to him had been dull and heavy, and his efforts at educating her had tried her patience a good deal, but all that would be at an end when he married her. A man could not treat his wife, the mistress of his house, like a schoolgirl. He would cease to tease her with books, and instead would expect her always to dress well and to look handsome, and both these requirements Bessie knew she could fulfil perfectly. Then, as Mr. Temple's wife, she expected to enjoy many novel pleasures and amusements. Her husband would be sure to take her to London, which she was longing to see, and to the theatre, and the opera, and the waxwork show —delights which she was certain she could appreciate as well as anybody else; and in such a whirl of pleasure she would not have time to feel how dull it was to be married to a gentleman. Deep and bitter was Bessie's disappointment when she realised that her marriage was to do nothing for her socially—

when she found that she must live in a small house such as she would willingly have shared with Job Tolley, or with any other young man of her own order, but which seemed to her mean and ridiculous for a gentleman to take his wife to.

When, in reply to some question of hers, Laurence told her that he never intended to live in the large house on the estate, and, in fact, had put it out of his power to do so by giving it away, Bessie was fairly carried out of herself with anger, scorn, and vexation. She did not attempt to deny that the home to which her husband had brought her was as good, and in many respects better, than the one she had left. But the little house was not what she had expected, it was not what she believed that she was entitled to as Mr. Temple's wife, and in this lay all the concentrated bitterness of her disappointment. The oak dresser that was to remind her of the one in the sitting-room in the old home, and that

her husband had ransacked half the farm-houses in the county to procure, merely roused unpleasant memories of the scoldings she had received from her mother for not keeping it better polished. The brass candlesticks that stood on the mantelpiece made her elbows ache to look at them as she remembered the hard rubbing they required to keep them bright. Bessie's bitter discontent must find some outlet, and, in the absence of her mother or of any neighbours to gossip with, she followed Hester from sitting-room to kitchen as she did the work of the little house, pouring into her willing ear a tide of mean, thankless grumbling. Had she taken the broom from Hester and plied it with her strong young arms, the genial glow of exercise would have spread through her frame, thawing the frost of discontent and resentment. But, no; she was a 'gentleman's' wife, and Bessie would remember that she was a 'lady,' though her husband did not choose

to remember that he was a 'gentleman.' She explained to her little servant that her master was a rich man, but very 'near,' and without proper pride; that he had insulted her by expecting his own wife to live in a cottage when his sister, Mrs. Stapleton, lived in a fine house in a big park; 'and if he thought me good-looking enough to be a lady,' she added, 'why couldn't he take me to a place where I could live according?' And mistress and maid entered into a tacit agreement to look down on the master of the house, and to despise him for his poor spirit.

Laurence Temple, who had been so communicative and talkative to Bessie while he was courting her, although it was in a style and on subjects that wearied her, as her husband became a very silent man. After the shock received on the night of their home-coming, when he saw that both himself and his young wife had fatally misread each other, he had striven to be patient and gentle with

her, and to persevere in the uphill task of educating her inexpansive, grown-up mind. But he was completely baffled. Bessie was cased in triple mail of invulnerable obstinacy, that no barb of wit, no trenchant blade of sarcasm, could penetrate. She set herself not to learn, not to allow her husband to cultivate her, not to be influenced by his opinions, not to take the trouble to understand and to sympathise with his ideas, and, though her efforts were negative, her success was positive. Foiled by his wife's dull, dense opposition, Laurence was soon compelled to abandon all attempts to guide and instruct her. He realised with consternation that her feminine power of resistance was stronger than his masculine power of insistance, her nay stronger than his yea, the negative force of her will more powerful than the positive force of his own. He, who had dreamed that he had power to mould a stubborn nature, to make it a mere adjunct of his own, working

in harmonious subserviency to his own will, now, wakened to the hopeless nature of the attempt, stood aghast at the extent of his own infatuation. Was he God that he could remake a human mind, cast it in his mould, and stamp upon it his own die? Laurence and his wife had not a thought in common, and, now that she no longer suffered him to attempt to teach her, the only link that had bound them together was snapped. In the intimacy of daily life each unwittingly annoyed and irritated the other; and it is precisely the small and oft-recurring vexations that fret and decay love rather than acknowledged wide differences of faith or opinion. Have not husbands and wives dwelt together in harmony who could not kneel at the same altar, who could not pray in the same words? But love that exerts a giant's force to surmount great obstacles is powerless to resist repeated mean shocks and petty alienating vulgarities. These draggle its plumes and

break its wings. For every shudder of repugnance kills a portion of love, and, though it might have withstood the strokes of fate, it is worn away by continual ignominious friction.

Laurence had very seldom taken a meal at the same table with Bessie until after their marriage, and on the few occasions when he had done so he had been in too exalted and preoccupied a frame of mind to observe anything critically.

But, now that he dined alone with her daily, he suffered all that an ultra-refined man, who himself was content to live on bread and fruit, and vegetables, could suffer in seeing his young wife eat largely of meat, and drink malt liquor with frank enjoyment. These are vulgar details, but they demand recognition because their power to inflict misery is so great. Mrs. Temple was as hearty as a schoolboy, and the food she enjoyed, and consumed largely, was of the kind that had revolted her

husband even when he had seen it devoured by boating-men at Cambridge. It was death to Temple to see those beautiful eyes beam joyful recognition to an underdone slice of roast beef. And his own abstemious habits, though they could not revolt his young wife, yet had a chilling and alienating effect on her mind. She regarded them as evidences of a proud and unsociable disposition, as a pretence on his part of being better than other people.

Laurence took refuge in hard work to tide him over the first miserable months of his married life. He rose early in the dark winter mornings to go to his study, and the first streak of dawn found him in the fields to see his men begin their day's labour. He arranged that his bailiff should bring him a cup of milk and some bread whenever he might happen to be on the farm at eight o'clock, and he breakfasted alone in the chill morning air, rather than indoors and at the same table with

Bessie, whom he could not endure to see beginning the day with a heavy meat meal. On wet mornings he took his simple breakfast in the barn, and shared his milk with a black and white cat, the anxious mother of three flighty kittens, who purred her thanks, and rubbed herself against his leg. On fine mornings he breakfasted sitting under a hedge in the bare fields, where the level beams of the winter sun touched every brown furrow with a soft glory. Here, with no fair, sullen face opposite to him, with no angry or discontented words spoken to wound or fret his spirit, he ate his frugal meal, and gave a dole of crumbs to the robin who sang his morning hymn on the bare bough. His noon dinner did not keep him indoors more than a quarter of an hour, when he left his wife to finish her substantial meal, untrammelled by his presence. The winter evenings were the great difficulty, when it was too dark for outdoor work by four o'clock in the afternoon, and long hours

of candle-light had to be lived through between then and the earliest hour at which it was possible to go to bed. How was he to beguile the tedious time with his young wife, who yawned with undisguised weariness of his society, and who, most unhappily for Laurence, no longer interested or attracted him?

Three evenings a week he provided for by holding a night-school for his farm labourers, who did not want to be taught anything, were tired and sleepy, and would rather have been in bed, or keeping themselves awake with beer and songs at the public-house, than grappling with the difficulties of the multiplication-table. The four remaining evenings of the week the young husband and wife must spend together, till the lengthening spring days should again enable Laurence to stay out of doors till supper-time. Sometimes he tried reading aloud to Bessie, but she was so unaffectedly wearied by it that he stopped out of sheer pity. Then he would try to talk to her as he

used to do when they were engaged, endeavouring to interest her in his thoughts and feelings. But this was worst of all, for Bessie no longer felt herself under any obligation to listen to him in the silence that he had mistaken for sympathy, but indulged in pert and rude comments on his remarks. Then he showed her his collection of photographs of persons and places, and this amused and pleased her, and made fifteen minutes pass less like a full hour than was its wont, till she came upon a portrait of Helen Wentworth, and her face changed instantly. Laurence turned over the offending page, and began to tell her the names of other friends whose photographs he pointed out to her.

'Why don't you say who that lady is?' Bessie asked, turning the pages of the album back to Helen's portrait.

'Because you know who it is already. There was no need to tell you it was Miss Wentworth.'

'Yes, I know who it was well enough, but you tried to pass it over, so that I shouldn't see.'

Laurence felt the full force of the insinuation, but he said nothing. If he had spoken then, it would have been to say something that neither of them could ever forget.

'I've got photographs as well as you,' continued Bessie in an insolent tone, 'and some of them perhaps folks you don't expect to see,' and she rose and reached from a cupboard a small photographic album, which she opened and laid on the table before her husband.

'I really don't care to look at it,' he said wearily.

'There's only one that I want you to look at,' Bessie replied, turning over the pages of the album with excited rapidity. 'There!' she exclaimed with rude triumph, 'if you've got Miss Wentworth in your book, I've got Job Tolley in mine!' and she spread the

album open before him at the page where the portrait of the cheesemonger's head-man leered out at the beholder with fatuous self-satisfaction.

Temple glanced for a moment at the mean and conceited face, then at his handsome young wife who showed it to him, and it flashed upon him that, in spite of her refined beauty, Bessie was mentally exactly suited to Job Tolley, and that in marrying her he might have separated kindred spirits.

'How do you like it?' said Bessie, determined that he should speak.

'I like it as well as I like the man himself,' said Laurence drily, and his wife laughed a very unpleasant laugh to herself.

It must not be supposed, however, that Bessie was always rude and provoking in her conduct to her husband. There were times when she tried to please him; but he was in such deep despair of ever evoking harmony out of their life, at once so sickened with dis-

appointment at the downfall of his hopes and angry with his own folly, that he too often failed to notice her attempts at conciliation, and Bessie conceived herself to be an injured woman.

On such occasions Hester was taken into her mistress's confidence, and much indignant whispering went on in the kitchen, which always ended in Mrs. Temple ordering a more than usually savoury supper for herself. Gladly we will pass from these sordid details, though it has been necessary to name them in order to show plainly the kind of life to which Temple had condemned himself.

At the end of six months spent as Bessie's husband, when love was lost, and in the isolation of his spirit Laurence could not tell but that friendship had slipped away from him also, he received a letter from Borradale, who had just returned to England. His year of travel had extended itself to eighteen months; but he was back again now, and he

promised Temple to come and see him as soon as he had paid his respects to his mother, his grandmother, and his seven sisters. He wrote in the highest spirits. Three of his six unmarried sisters, he said, had lately become engaged—Ethel, the next older than himself, to their common friend Dick Norton. 'Norton,' he went on to say, 'writes ecstatically to me. He has just discovered my sister, whom I have known intimately for a quarter of a century. In fact, as she had the start of me in life, I cannot remember the time when she was not, so that I can scarcely enter into the discoverer's rapture, though he has written to me a very long letter, in which he fully describes to me the earliest companion of my childhood. And you, my dear fellow, I long to see you and your wife in your home I am sure Bessie (but, I forget, I must say Mrs. Temple—Bessie me no Bessies)—I am sure she makes your home beautiful by her presence, and I wish you both all the joy that

you deserve. For myself, I am as unmarried as ever, but who knows what I may be tempted to do when I have seen the happiness you have so boldly carved out for yourself?'

Temple crushed the letter in his hand and sighed bitterly. He knew that the price to be paid for the delight of meeting his friend would be that Borradale must see for himself the nakedness of the land; that his marriage was a wretched and unsuitable one; and that he had made a most grievous mistake. Unhappiness no less than happiness creates its own atmosphere, of which an outsider is instinctively aware, and his friend would speedily perceive that he and his wife were wholly unsuited to one another, and irreconcilably opposed by nature. Nor could Laurence look to Bessie for any help, had it been possible to hide from Borradale's keen perception the true state of the case. Mrs. Temple was not a gentlewoman, and she was as wanting in tact as she was in good man-

ners, and when she was displeased with her husband, or felt rude and aggressive in temper, she took no pains to disguise the fact. She could not throw a mantle of courtesy or good breeding over the wretchedness of her home life, and she preferred, rather than otherwise, that it should stand revealed in all its ugliness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FRIENDS MEET AGAIN.

'Let no man flatter himself with the strength of his own judgment, as if he was able to choose any particular station in life for himself; man is a short-sighted creature, sees but a very little way before him; and, as his passions are none of his best friends, so his particular affections are generally his worst counsellors.'—DEFOE.

LESS than a week sufficed Borradale in which to pay his respects to his numerous female relations after his long absence from England, and then he was at liberty to visit Temple and see his friend in the novel dual character of farmer and married man. Laurence Temple as a farmer he could just imagine. He had already tried his hand at several trades, so that there was no insuperable difficulty in supposing him to have taken

up with a fresh one; but Temple as a married man, and with Bessie Jarvis for his wife, was an idea altogether beyond Borradale's powers of realisation, and lay in the domain of the inconceivable.

He had been struck by the ominous silence that Temple had preserved in his letters concerning his young wife and their home life together. Up to the time of his marriage his praises of Bessie's good qualities were so warm and continuous that Borradale at last almost believed that they must rest upon some foundation of fact. But in all the letters that he had received from his friend during the last six months, beyond the bare statement that the wedding had taken place, and that his home was now at Pine Hill, there was not a word to lead him to suppose that Temple had attained the object of his desire, and made the ideal marriage.

It was a chilly evening in early spring when Temple welcomed his friend at Pine

Cottage. In the year and a half since they had met both were somewhat changed in appearance. Borradale had grown broader and stouter, he was bronzed and sunburnt with travel, and the undaunted expression of his face bordered on the aggressive. Temple was thinner, and sharper in outline of form and feature, and he seemed to his friend as though he had shrunk and become smaller, while he had lost the look of strength and vigour that had formerly characterised him.

He received Borradale with a touching warmth of affection, very different from the light and airy farewell with which he had allowed him to depart when, in the first glamour of love, friendship had been momentarily deposed from its abiding place in Temple's heart. Bessie was upstairs adorning herself to receive her own and her husband's old friend, and the two men had ample time to have their first greeting over before she made her appearance.

Laurence dragged forward the big chair that had waited six months for his friend, and said, smiling, 'This is your own especial chair, old fellow; I chose it for you. Home would not be home without a place in it for you,' and Borradale flung himself into the depths of the wide, hospitable chair, his dark face beaming with satisfaction. He glanced round the room with its simple refinement of furniture and ornament, made bright with mingled fire and candle-light, and luxuriated in the contrast it presented to the bitter cold outside.

'Temple,' he said heartily, 'this is the cosiest spot I have been in since you, and I, and Norton spent that delightful, ridiculous time together in Anne Haggart's cottage. But I must give yours the palm; there are no draughts in this little place, the room is simply perfection,' and he winked his dark eyes rapidly.

'Yes, the room is well enough; I was

satisfied with it when I had finished it,' said Temple gloomily.

'You are hard to please if you are not satisfied with it still. I know why it all looks so familiar to me. I have only this moment found it out. Of course I know what it is! The whole style of the room and disposition of the furniture is almost the counterpart of the Jarvises' front room, with such refined added touches as express yourself. What a pretty idea to bring your wife to a home so like the one you take her from, that nothing in it could strike her as strange and unfamiliar! It must preserve a great sense of continuity in her life, and what might have been a bewildering change is merely like opening the second volume of a pleasant story, when she had finished and closed the first. She must have been delighted with it.'

Laurence had turned his back while Borradale was speaking, and busied himself with re-arranging the books on the shelves.

'She must have been delighted with it,' he repeated after his friend without turning towards him, and playing with a volume as he spoke. 'No, my dear fellow, my little attempt at a delightful surprise turned out much more of a surprise than a delight. We each have our ideal, I suppose, and unfortunately Bessie's and mine do not coincide. She had set her heart on blue rep curtains, and an arsenic-green wool hearth-rug, and chandeliers done up in yellow gauze, and things of that sort, and footmen in plush breeches and silk stockings, I believe. She says this is not a fit home for a gentleman to bring his wife to. It has taken the heart out of me more than such nonsense need have done, I own,' and the door opened and his speech was cut short by Bessie entering the room, looking exceedingly handsome.

Borradale rose and greeted her respectfully and kindly. Laurence was in her power, and she could so easily place obstacles

in the way of their meeting that it behoved him to be on the best of terms with his friend's wife. Bessie had matured considerably since Borradale had last seen her. She was altogether on a more ample and womanly scale; she seemed even to have gained a little in height. She struck him as looking handsomer than ever; but, in addition to her naturally cold expression, Borradale noted some recently acquired subtle indications of temper and disappointment in her face.

'It is a great pleasure to me to visit my friend in his own home, and to find that his wife is no stranger to me,' he said, as he shook hands with Mrs. Temple. 'Which is your chair? This looks to me like a lady's chair. Will you not take a seat near the fire?' and he placed a low chair for her in a comfortable corner.

Bessie seated herself with as much rustling and fluttering of her dress as possible, and said, as she extended her slender foot towards

the fender, 'I don't know much about ladies' chairs here, but one chair does to sit in as well as another. You never expected to find us living in a place like this, I'm sure, Mr. Borradale,' and the handsome eyes cast a very unlovely glance round the room, including her husband in their comprehensive and contemptuous sweep, as one unpleasant item among many.

Borradale laughed good-humouredly, as though he understood Bessie to intend a small joke.

'Well, I really did not expect to find you in such a delightfully cosy house, for one does not often see such a one. I hope you will let me come and visit you and my old friend in it sometimes?'

'Oh, you're welcome to come when you choose, Mr. Borradale. *I* call it a cottage, and you're the first of Mr. Temple's friends to enter the door. They look down on him for living in a place like this, and I tell him

they're right, for they know how a gentleman ought to live, if he doesn't.'

'Bessie,' said her husband, wishful politely to silence her, and, if possible, to divert the current of her thoughts, 'there is one thing we are all agreed upon, and that is that a gentleman cannot live without food. Will you oblige me by asking Hester to let us have supper as soon as possible? Mr. Borradale has had a long journey, and must be hungry.'

Bessie might have rung the bell for her little servant, but she preferred going into the kitchen to give her further directions; so she rose and left the room, closing the door sharply after her.

Laurence turned towards his friend. 'You see how it is, Borradale; that poor girl is simply fretting away our happiness with bitter worldly disappointment because I did not take her to a house like Coombe Delaway. I should have thought that a house that pleased

me might have satisfied Terah Jarvis's daughter.'

Borradale refrained from exercising friendship's most odious privilege of candour, and neither said 'I told you so,' nor asked him what else he could expect, but said gently, 'It by no means follows, I fear, that what pleases you will satisfy Terah Jarvis's daughter. Since you have thought right to mention the subject to me, may I say that the presumption appears to me to be rather the contrary? What suits the cultivated simplicity of your present taste, and pleases you as a contrast to luxuries which you have tried and now regard with indifference, might easily be displeasing and disappointing to your wife. You see, Temple, a girl in Bessie Jarvis's position is, so to speak, on her promotion in marrying a gentleman, and as your wife she may naturally have expected to live in a very different style from what she was accustomed to at home. I can't say I think it wise in her to be disap-

pointed, and for your sake, old fellow, I'm sorry she is so; but if you look at the thing fairly all round it isn't altogether unnatural that she should feel disappointed, is it? She is very young,' he added as he looked into Temple's troubled face.

'The very reason why I thought she would so easily and readily adopt my ideas, and fall in with my simple mode of living,' he replied.

Borradale continued gently, for he was treading on delicate ground. 'My dear fellow, you prefer simple living because you have tried luxurious living also, and, having seen both sides of the question, you are competent to make a choice. No one can be said intelligently to prefer any given mode of life till he has tried its opposite. Now, Bessie has not had your opportunities of contrasting two styles of living, and of choosing the one that pleases her best. Perhaps, if she might choose for herself, she would exercise her independent judgment by arriving at a conclusion

entirely different from your own. Novelty has charms for us all, Temple.'

'My dear Borradale,' said his friend, smiling ruefully, 'the drift of your argument is this,—that, as I wished to try love in a cottage, I should have been wiser if I had asked a lady to make the experiment with me, and it is too late to hark back now.'

'Do you think it would improve matters if you made some little concession to Mrs. Temple, and took her to live in a large house, if that is the object of her ambition? It need not in any way interfere with the simplicity of your own personal habits.'

Temple shook his head. 'No,' he said with decision, 'I cannot give the lie to everything I have thought, said, and done for years past. I determined that my married life should be as simple as my bachelor life has been, and I did not doubt that a woman of humble birth and circumstances would be the wife, in all the world, to help me to live up to my creed.'

'If your mind was so fixed on the idea, did you not prepare Bessie to expect no change in her mode of living and home when she should be your wife?' asked Borradale.

'I did not tell her in so many words what she was to expect. The very essence of all I laboured to teach her was that I valued simplicity of living above all things, and that I estimate men for what they are and not for what they have, and will not suffer myself to be influenced by the wealth and luxury that surround men and cast a glamour over them. I did not in so many words tell her that I should take her to a home substantially like the one she was leaving; I reserved that for a beautiful surprise. I was sure that when she saw the pains I had taken to prepare our home with the tenderest regard for the memories and associations of her childhood she would understand how I loved her, if she had not known it before,' and Borradale was thankful that Temple was interrupted and silenced by

Hester entering the room to lay the cloth for supper.

It had relieved his friend to speak of his grief and disappointment, but it was exquisitely painful to listen to him, and moreover it could do Temple no good. There are sorrows, notably those of our own seeking, that must be borne with such dignity as we can command, dignity that is not compatible with taking another into our confidence.

While Borradale grieved for the wrong-headedness and want of tact that had led his friend into this particular phase of domestic misery, he was able to feel a genuine impersonal pity for his friend's wife. He knew something of the poverty of her nature, and he believed that Temple was not the man to make the best of a hard and unimaginative woman, and he thought Bessie would have made a better wife to almost any other man than Temple, who would have gratified a few

of her fancies, and not have done her the initial wrong of idealising her, and expected her to live up to his ideal.

At supper Borradale endeavoured to divert Temple's attention from present irritations by stirring up their mutual recollections of the old happy Cambridge days. Thus pleasantly challenged, he responded to his friend's efforts, his brow cleared, his ready genial smile illumined his face, and Laurence Temple was himself again. In short, he forgot that he was married to Bessie Jarvis. His frugal meal of salad and water acquired a flavour as of truffles and champagne, while his spirit was braced by Borradale's lively conversation and manly cheerfulness. He averted his eyes from the alienating sight of his young wife skilfully using her knife for purposes better effected by the help of a fork, and, smiling at Borradale, he said :

'I used to wonder at Cambridge that you took up with such a fellow as I am ; you

avoided other men of extreme opinions so entirely.'

'And I should have avoided you too, my dear Temple, you may depend upon it, if you had been hot on making proselytes. It does not concern me what a man's opinions are, so long as he will kindly refrain from cramming them down one's throat. I confess I found fellows of extreme views, who were seeking converts at every turn, a nuisance. I joined in no hobby race myself, because almost every man that I know who has done so has lost his head, and I wish to keep my senses. "Let me not go mad, sweet Heaven, let me not go mad,"' and he took a deep draught of water. 'Now, look at that innocent beverage,' he said, holding up his refilled glass towards Temple, so that the light of the candle shone through the clear medium, 'look at that innocent beverage! Who would suppose it could get into a man's head, affect his brain, and alter his very nature? Yet such was the case,

you remember, with our friend Smith, of Caius.'

'Ah! I remember,' said Temple, 'he insisted upon it that I was worse than a drunkard because, though I drank no stimulants myself, it was simply from motives of my own, and I would sign no pledge nor urge others to adopt my habits.'

'Yes, he rode the tectotal hobby with a blue bridle, and it ran away with him. From the moment in which he clapped heels to his hobby-horse the whole wide world, which some of us still think was made for a variety of purposes, became contracted for him to a mere recruiting ground for total abstainers from intoxicating drinks. Then poor old Drysdale, he mounted the Socialist hobby, and excommunicated everyone who was not of his way of thinking, which, by-the-bye, was a considerable number of people. Nothing in the universe gave him any satisfaction except himself, the man of clear vision. He elected

himself fault-finder in general to every human institution, and was seriously displeased with Heaven for allowing the world to wag contrary to Drysdale's ideas.'

'Ah, poor Drysdale!' said Temple, hastily looking away from his wife, who was helping herself to the contents of a meat pie with a discrimination and breathless interest that shocked him; 'poor Drysdale! I dare say each of us holds his sanity with a more or less weak grasp, but he let go altogether. No doubt both Smith and Drysdale believed they were helping forward human progress, though their minds were so sectarian that each thought a reformation could only be effected on his own narrow lines.'

'Well, my dear Temple, and I too, although I happen to be sane, believe in the progress of the human race. I think something might ultimately be done for the world but for the zealous people in it,' and Borradale smiled an odd, mischievous smile. Then he proceeded

to beguile his friend with a history of his travels, of the strange countries he had seen, and the great variety of men with whom he had come in contact. 'At the end of a year and a half's knocking about on equal terms with all sorts and conditions of men, I have come to a somewhat paradoxical conclusion: that I have at once less esteem and more affection for my fellow-creatures than I had when I knew less of them. How is one to account for that?' he said.

'Surely affection that grows while esteem diminishes is only another name for pity?' suggested Temple.

'I think not,' replied Borradale cheerfully. 'Allow me to give you a little chicken,' he said, noticing that Mrs. Temple was looking hungrily at the dish before him, after having reduced the meat pie to a cavernous ruin. 'I am afraid we are rather dull companions for you this evening; you must excuse us for rattling on at this rate to each other, and we

shall be glad if you will join in our conversation.'

'I don't talk much at meal times, I've something else to do,' Bessie observed with dull gravity, stretching out a hand towards the bread sauce and gravy before Borradale had time to offer them to her. Temple was on thorns.

'You don't think, then, that affection without esteem is akin to pity?' he repeated, desperately turning back to the last subject spoken of before this unpleasing interruption occurred.

'No; for is not pity usually dispensed *de haut en bas*? And I have no superiority above my fellows that enables me to mount a moral eminence and sprinkle them as from a watering-can of compassion. If we have finished supper, won't you come into my little library and have a smoke there?' and Temple rose as he spoke.

'I will with pleasure, if the smell of

tobacco in the house is not unpleasant to Mrs. Temple.'

'I haven't seen so much as a pipe since I left home,' said Bessie tartly; 'and I shall be glad to smell anything that reminds me of ordinary folks's ways and doings.'

Borradale bowed to his hostess as though she had accorded a most gracious assent, and the two young men retired into the library, closing the door behind them.

'Friend of my heart,' said Borradale lightly as he filled his pipe; 'have you not reached a stage in life in which you might take to smoking with advantage?'

Temple looked at him with a smile half sad, half playful. 'I have not yet felt the need of it; I prefer to suffer without an anodyne.'

The two men sat up till far into the night, rejoicing in each other's company, and discussing all things in heaven and earth. They talked about religion, about politics, about

women, the three subjects on which it is admitted that men quarrel most fiercely and hate each other most cordially. Yet love was so real between the friends that they discussed amicably topics on which they differed strongly, and so attained to a wider vision by regarding the same subject from different points of view. Gradually, as the night advanced and silence reigned in the little house, the two friends descended from the discussion of public affairs to those of present and personal interest.

'Should you have any objection, Borradale, to act as joint executor with my brother-in-law, John Stapleton, to a fresh will that I am making?'

'Not the least in the world, my dear fellow. I will be your executor, or anything else that will give you peace of mind, but you must let me draw up your will for you. You know my skill of old in draughting a legal document, and you are aware of the sort of

client a man is said to have who acts as his own lawyer.'

The next morning Temple breakfasted in the house with his wife and Borradale, and afterwards proposed to his friend that he should take him over the estate and show him the nature of the work to which he devoted his time, energy, and fortune. Borradale was a countryman and understood a good deal about agriculture, so that he was interested in all that Temple told him, or showed him, down to the smallest detail. But his practical eye saw that affairs were conducted on an unreasonably lavish scale, and that the farm was worked at a wholly unnecessary expenditure, and he argued tenaciously that on that light soil they ought to be feeding sheep instead of fattening cattle.

'But such cattle as we shall breed will pay us twentyfold for all expenses,' said Laurence cheerfully. 'Roach is a splendid

judge, and I have just allowed him to give 200*l.* for a bull of a prize strain.'

'What proof have you that the beast belongs to the royal family of cattle?' asked Borradale, winking rapidly.

'Why, Roach says'——

'Roach be hanged!' said Borradale incisively. 'If you know enough about the matter to trust your own judgment in giving 200*l.* for a beast, well and good; but, if not, don't trust that fellow to spend such sums for you.'

'Oh, I trust the man implicitly, and he truly says the first year on a farm is bound to be the most expensive. To stock a place of this size, as we are doing, and to put up such permanent farm buildings as ours, necessarily costs a great deal, and I can't look for any profit for a long time.'

'No, that's evident. But, Temple, I don't like your bailiff.'

'Why not? He is a thoroughly trustworthy man.'

'That is precisely what I venture to doubt. Where did you get him from?'

'He was a stranger to me when he applied for the situation. He told me frankly that he had not held a similar one before, but I liked the look of the man, and promoted him to be my bailiff.'

'Liked the look of the man!' thought Borradale, 'that is just what I do not like; and if rogue is not written on his face I am much mistaken. Poor old Temple never was a judge of character; however, in this case I hope he is right, and that I am wrong.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE STRIKE AT SMOKINGTON.

Tim Ballinger's apprehension that a crisis would be brought about at Calder's works by the restless impatience and malice of Bill Anslow was justly founded. The strike did not happen as soon as Tim had expected, nor did it seem to him, when it came, to be at a well-chosen time. The men had allowed the summer to pass by in fruitless talk and angry recrimination, while a minority, led by Ballinger, had exerted themselves to prevent matters from coming to a crisis. Anslow and Ballinger were both 'puddlers,' though Ballinger was the better workman of the two, and his larger earnings always excited Anslow's bitterest jealousy. Had Anslow been as industrious as

Ballinger, he would have earned as much money, for theirs was piece-work, and each man was paid for the amount of puddled iron turned out from his furnace. But it suited Anslow better to hate his fellow-workman than to emulate his example, and to persuade himself, as he received his smaller wages for less work done, that he was an injured member of the community. It was easier to believe that he was a martyr to a vicious system than to compel himself to steady industry, and to think that the whole world was out of gear rather than perceive that the poor little item of self was not doing its best in its allotted sphere. If a curse could have withered the sinews of Tim's strong right arm, or a blow have crippled his stalwart frame, Anslow would have uttered the curse and dealt the blow.

'What business has he got doing more work than other folks? Chaps like Ballinger's the disgrace of the working classes, and his extra wages is no better than stole out o' my

pocket. There ain't a chap in our union as 'ud do such a dirty trick as work harder nor other chaps,' and Anslow brought his pewter pot down with a bang that carried conviction to his hearers and dinted a circle in the ale-house table.

This was the expression of Bill Anslow's settled opinion of Tim Ballinger, and if he was asked inconvenient questions as to a man's right to work hard if he pleased, or why, if he thought Tim got too much money, he did not work harder himself and earn as much or more, he offered no reason in defence of his position, but fell back on the assertion that Ballinger, 'curse him, had no business to work more 'n other chaps.'

The bulk of Anslow's hearers were as incapable of appreciating argument as their leader was of offering it to them. They required merely the ceaseless iteration of a set phrase, loosely embodying an idea which all could grasp, accompanied by abuse and denun-

ciation of those who differed from them, and Anslow was singularly fitted to provide them with such intellectual fare. While much ill-will was smouldering among the men at Calder's works, a rise of wages took place in the neighbourhood, and Anslow, backed by his union, resolved to force on a strike at once unless their employer would raise their wages also.

A deputation of half a dozen of the men, with Anslow for their spokesman, waited on Mr. Calder in his office, and he gave a patient, courteous hearing to all that they had to say. Anslow pleaded that the state of trade justified them in demanding a rise in wages, and Mr. Calder denied that this was the case, and showed them the books of his firm in proof of the assertion. He reminded them that during the years of depression, by paying them a fixed wage, he had prevented them suffering from the bad times, and that the rise of wages at a neighbouring work only brought them up to the same rate Mr. Calder was then paying.

But both argument and proof were thrown away on Anslow and his friends. They had not come to hear reason, but to demand a rise of wages, and if their employer refused to grant it them, then, in order to compel him, they would resort to the wasteful expedient of a strike.

Men of Tim Ballinger's moderate and sensible views were outnumbered, and Mr. Calder, who would submit to no intimidation, determined to retire from business while he had anything left to retire with, and to invest his capital in some other industry, less likely to be frustrated by the caprice of his workmen.

'Strike then,' he said calmly. 'You are many, I am but one; you have numbers on your side, I have right on mine. I am protected by no union. I have never belonged to a masters' union, offensive or defensive, but you make a mistake if you fancy that you, with the weight of your union at your back, can intimidate me or make me alter my de-

termination, which I know to be just. To say anything more to you would be a waste of words, so I wish you all good-day.'

Tim Ballinger resembled his master in belonging to no union. And so far he had not felt the need of it. He had worked for employers who dealt justly and honestly, so that thus far he had not required the aid of the costly machinery of a trades-union to protect him against abuse of power from which he had never suffered. But when in his little world Tim saw clamour and unreason prevail over good sense and moderation he wished that he belonged to a union that would maintain him, now that his fellow-workmen had taken the bread out of his mouth.

Tim Ballinger was a Forester, and was provided for in illness and in old age, and he had also a small sum of money in the savings-bank as well as in the sick club. But now, in full health and strength, and expert in the practice of a skilled trade, he was suddenly thrown out

of work through the perverse folly of his fellow-workmen, and, unless he could find employment at once, he would be obliged to consume the little hoard that had cost him so many years of industry to accumulate.

Tim accused Anslow of taking the bread out of the mouths of harder-working men than himself by forcing on the strike that had driven Calder to close his works and leave the town, and Anslow retorted that it was Ballinger's fault for hindering them from striking sooner, at a time when it would have been successful. From angry words the two men rapidly came to blows, and Tim discovered how much easier it is to knock a man down than to convince him of error by any show of reason. The quarrel between the two men was very bitter, and Anslow would not let it die out. When Tim passed him in the street with averted face, determined not to see him or speak to him, Anslow would follow him with jibing taunts that were well nigh

unbearable, and sometimes ended, as he desired, in rousing Tim to a pitch of fury. But generally Tim pursued his way in dogged silence, leaving Anslow's wrath to foam and swear itself out. He did not know the nature of the man, nor of the deep, malicious hatred he bore him.

Anslow had always been jealous of Tim's higher wages, and of his popularity among their fellow-workmen, and now he would never forgive him his crowning offence of preventing a strike taking place at a time when Anslow believed their master would have been compelled to yield. He felt all the rage and wounded pride of the leader of a political party when he saw his followers won over to Tim's side, and a hostile majority formed that prevented the strike, which had reduced him to impotency. In Anslow's eyes Tim was furthermore guilty of Mr. Calder closing his works, because if they had struck when he wanted he could not have afforded to leave the town; he would

have been obliged to stay and fulfil his contracts, and give the wages his men demanded. And, now that Anslow was out of work, he had nothing to do but to brood over his injuries and grievances, all of which he attributed to Tim Ballinger, and to nurse his hatred and keep it warm.

In the anxious week before the attempted strike, the more depressed Tim became, the more hopeful and cheery grew Mrs. Brimer.

'If ever there was a time, Ballinger, when you'd a call to thank the Lord more than ordinary for sending you an old woman to take care of you, it's a coming now. Why, if you'd got a young wife on your hands, she'd be lyin' in, or somethin' as bad, just when wages was stopped, and if she wasn't, and you'd to tramp the country for work, you wouldn't dare not to leave her behind, she'd be up to some mischief or other, I be bound. You can't trust 'em. Now you could leave me to mind the house and the little wench for

a twelvemonth, you could, and I should work for both till times was better. It don't take hardly nothing to keep an old woman, but the money a young one 'ud cost you in vittles alone 'ud be a shame to be seen, and what she didn't spend on her vittles she'd put on her back, or carry a-top of her head. A strong man like you, Ballinger, 's no call to lose heart, so long as he don't hamper himself with no young women, but, if ever you do, it'll be God help you then, for I never can!'

Saturday morning came, when the men's notice at Calder's works expired, and Tim had just received the last wages that would ever be paid him by his present employer. Mr. Calder shook hands with him as he bade him good-bye.

'If there had been more men like you, Tim, willing to work on till better times, I should not have had to close these works.'

'There's more o' my way o' thinking than

appears, sir, but it's Anslow's jaw—he talked 'em over. It's all jaw that does it.'

'Jaw is a great power in bigger places than Smokington, Tim. Well, you and I are both going elsewhere to seek our fortunes. I wish you good luck, and if ever I can be of any service to you I hope you will let me know; but I shall be a poorer man, and without the useful position I have filled here. Good-bye, Ballinger.'

'Good-bye, sir,' said Tim, heartily grasping the proffered hand; 'you're a man as I could ha' worked under contented all my life, or if you'd been my mate I could ha' worked with you and never had a wry word.'

Tim Ballinger walked home, feeling angry and dispirited, a mood in which a man needs nothing to irritate or annoy him in his own house. He stood for a minute on the step to stamp the mud from his thick boots, and, raising the latch, he opened the front door and entered the cottage, but was met, and almost

driven back, by a dense cloud of steam. As it cleared a little Tim could faintly discern the form of Mrs. Brimer in the background, presiding, witch-like, over a boiling cauldron, into which she was casting armsful of wet clothes.

'Confound it all, Mrs. Brimer, if this ain't too bad! Washing day broke out again of a Saturday worse nor ever, when to my certain knowledge it was all tidied up o' Thursday. It's onnatural!' and Tim Ballinger felt strongly inclined to rush out and spend some of Calder's last pay at the 'Blue Boar.'

'Don't take on, dearie, i' that'n,' said Mrs. Brimer gently, opening the back door to let out the steam, and then, wiping her wet hands on a towel, 'Set you down by the fire while I tell you all about it. This steam ain't common steam, Tim. It's the same as if you smelt the steam when I was bilin' a pudden for dinner.'

'I can't make out as it smells no different

than usual,' said Tim, sniffing the steam critically, 'yaller soap and flannel smells the same o' Saturday as o' Thursday, so far as my nose tells me.'

'That's just because you men don't know nothing at all,' and Mrs. Brimer set bread and cheese and beer on a small table, and drew it towards Tim.

'Here, my lad, eat summat, and you'll see and smell different just now. It's a full heart goes with an empty stomach,' and she watched Tim, whose appetite was beyond the power of trouble or anxiety to affect, while he made a solid meal on the good things she had provided.

'I doubt it's more cheese than beef as we shall have now, mother,' said Tim ruefully, as he gathered up the last crumbs on the point of his knife.

'Don't be too sure o' that,' said Mrs. Brimer, smiling mysteriously, 'when you've got nobody but yourself to fend for.'

'Nobody but myself! Anyhow I've got you and the little wench to keep, and you don't neither of you look like dying.'

'And it 'll be a black day for you when I do die,' said the old woman with decision. 'We might, p'r'aps, if we was put to it, part with little Polly, though it 'ud be none so easy if she was took, but losing me 'ud be the ruin of you. Look 'ere, Tim, what you've got to do. You say there ain't no work for you here at Smokington. Very well, then, if you're sure o' that, you set out o' Monday morning and try at all the works i' Staffordshire till you get a job, and if you can't get none, why, do the same as you done afore, and go down into Wales, and wherever you settle don't you be afraid but me an' the little wench 'll follow you!'

'Well, mother, I believe as you know what's best to be done. And I can send you and little Polly summat every week out o' the savings-bank; but you won't be able to live,

not like we have lived, till I get another job.'

'You 'old your tongue about sending your money 'ere and your money there,' said Mrs. Brimer, smiling fondly upon Tim; 'you 'ush while I tell you about that steam, as you wasn't over-civil about just now. That steam's washing as I'm taking in to keep me and the little wench till you've got a job again, for I'm not a-goin' to set still eating up your savings. I'm not a young woman as I should hang round a man's neck and pick his bones. Me and little Polly 'll fend for ourselves fine,' and the old woman's face beamed with joy and pride.

Tim took her hand, all sodden from the wash-tub, and held it between his horny palms.

His eyes had grown suddenly misty, so that he could not clearly see the stern old face with its softened smile; but he held her poor wrinkled hand tightly in his, while he uttered

the words that were the sweetest to Mrs. Brimer to hear:

'Old lady,' he said in a husky voice, 'I'm proud o' you. You beat all the young women hollow!'

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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